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JOHN GALSWORTHY.

The February

ELINOR GLYN.

ROYAL

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HEALTH IN EVERY BOX.

BEECHAM'S PILLS.

WORTH A GUINEA A BOX.

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Another Dramatic Adventure in the Career of Claud Heathwaite, C.B.

A Page of Secret History

By William Le Queux.

Illustrated by A. Gilbert.

PERHAPS, if you have been to Rome, you know that somewhat obscure wine-shop in the Via del Pozzetto, near the central post-office, called the "Barile"—the Barrel. Few foreigners, however, go there. It is patronised largely by business men, deputies, and officials in Rome, while diplomatic underlings also go there to enjoy the perfectly-cooked Roman dishes, especially the *carciofi 'alla giudéa*—artichokes cooked in oil.

The Via del Pozzetto is a rather narrow street and the place is not well lit, but a luncheon there is a revelation. Indeed, I always pity the winter visitor to the Eternal City who lives in his *hôtel de luxe* and has imitation French fare, while certain of the humble little wine-shops give the best-cooked meals in all the world.

The hour was one o'clock one cold January day. At a side table in the busy restaurant I sat with my friend, Monty Mason, who, after serving as third secretary to the Ball-Platz before the War, was now second secretary at our Embassy in Rome.

Monty nudged me and glanced across at a tall, dark, good-looking girl who had entered with a pale-faced, fragile old man.

"There they are!" he whispered. "I told you they'd come!"

"Great Scott!" I gasped, when my eyes fell upon the man. "Why, it's old Filodor!"

"What do you mean?" he asked in an undertone. "That's Ferdinando Pasquali, about whom you have been inquiring."

I remained silent. So Clément Filodor and Ferdinando Pasquali were one and the same! This discovery so upset all my calculations that I sat speechless.

"The old man is surely not the notorious Filodor!" remarked my friend. "You must be mistaken."

"I'm not mistaken," I said promptly. "And who is the girl? What do you know of her?"

"Nothing, except the fact that she is his nurse. The old fellow is in a state of senile decay, and never goes out unless the girl accompanies him."

I noticed how she helped him off with his coat and hung it up with his hat and stick, and how she placed a chair for him and unfolded his table-napkin. Meanwhile the old man, who was nearly eighty, sat gazing about him with the inane smile of one whose wits are not exactly normal.

But was it all a mask? Clément Filodor was not the age of Ferdinando Pasquali, and he certainly did not lack intelligence, for he was one of the most astute and cunning scoundrels in all Europe.

I recollected my instructions. A week ago I had arrived in Milan on my way home to London from Fiume, when a telegram had been handed me by the concierge of the Hôtel Cavour—a message which informed me that a King's Messenger was on his way to me, being due in Milan on the following night.

He arrived after midnight, and gave me a cipher dispatch which took me nearly an hour to de-code. When I had mastered it, I found that I was ordered to Rome upon another special mission—one which was both exciting and mysterious. Gordon Gray, one of the "greyhounds of Europe," returned to London by the morning train, while I left ten minutes later for the Eternal City, disappointed that I was not going to London, for Myrtle Merriman, a very great friend of mine, and her father were coming up to town from Cheshire, and she and I had arranged to go to several "shows" and to two or three dances.

All had in a moment been knocked on the head. Instead of the Folkestone boat from Boulogne, I sat in the *wagon-restaurant* speeding over the great plain of Lombardy towards the huge barrier of snow-clad Appenines which I could see in the clear, frosty distance.

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I recollected those confidential instructions as I gazed upon the decrepit old man and his good-looking nurse.

Some clever game was being played.

So old Clément Filodor and Ferdinando Pasquali were one and the same, I thought again.

"What's the girl's name?" I whispered to Monty Mason.

"She's called Nicoletta. But I don't know her surname. They live on the first floor in the Via Pontefici, two doors from the Corso, on the right."

"Have our Embassy people mentioned anything to the police?" I asked.

"No. We were awaiting you before we did anything. The Chief says he leaves the whole matter in your hands. He reported to Downing Street by special messenger a week ago, and they wired that they would get in touch with you immediately."

I was silent. It was gratifying that His Excellency the Ambassador had hesitated to mention to the Rome police that the mysterious Ferdinando Pasquali was in the capital. Had he done so, and had the police recognised the old fellow's true identity, then we could not possibly have hoped to discover what devil's work was in progress.

Again I glanced across at the feeble-looking old man who wore round, steel-rimmed spectacles, and a grey beard, cropped short. When last I had seen him—it was in Teitz's stores in Berlin—his beard had been much longer. But the high cheek-bones, the pale, shrunken cheeks, and the large black, piercing eyes were the same. I knew that though he presented such a decrepit and pathetic figure, waited on so tenderly by his nurse, he was nevertheless a strong, athletic, hearty man, whose activity was equal to that of most men twenty years his junior.

In order not to attract the attention of the girl, Nicoletta—who I saw was not unconscious of the fact that she was very good-looking and that a number of men present were admiring her—we rose and left the place.

"Well, Heathwaite, what will you do?" asked my friend.

"Do? I hardly know yet," was my reply. "When you told me of Pasquali, I had no idea he was the notorious Clément Filodor."

"Will you see Maroni?"

"No," I replied, as we walked together. "The Commendatore Maroni is a very excellent director of detective police, but I think, at least for the present, I will work without him."

I parted from him ouside Bocconi's big shop, and, crossing the Piazza Colonna, entered a café to reflect. I sat there for half-an hour over my coffee, and then I went out again. In that half-hour I had formed a plan of campaign. That I was sailing near the wind, I knew; but since I had discovered the dual identity of Pasquali and Filodor I saw the extreme seriousness of the whole situation.

I strolled through the frosty streets to the busy Piazza Venezia, and turned to the left down that mediæval street, the Via del Plebiscito, until I came to the great fortress-like Palazzo Sandrelli, that huge, forbidding place built in the days when the palaces of the all-powerful Roman nobility were really fortresses against the populace.

Constructed of huge stone blocks in the days of the Borgias, its windows were closely barred until it presented the appearance of a prison rather than the private residence of the Sandreili, one of the oldest families of all the Roman aristocracy.

At the door stood the picturesque porter in seventeenth-century livery, with big brass buttons, a cocked hat, and a large silver-mounted staff.

"The Donna Stella?" I inquired of him.

"Yes, Signore," was the gorgeous flunkey's reply, pointing into the great courtyard of the palace, wherein sat another servant in a little room beneath an archway lit by a gas-jet.

I crossed those stones worn by centuries of horsemen and pedestrians, and was at once conducted up a flight of stone stairs beside which, carved in the crumbling stone, were many escutcheons of the princely House of Sandrelli, and their family connections.

On the first floor we passed through a heavy door, and then on to rich carpets along a wide corridor running the whole length of the ponderous palace. Below, in the old days, were the stables and servants' quarters, but nowadays they were converted into small shops and warehouses, so that the private apartments, with the wonderful gilt furniture of the Renaissance, the frescoes by Michael Angelo, the five priceless paintings by Raphael, and the gorgeous fourteenth-century tapestries were actually over quite sordid little businesses, which included a wine shop, where the wine from the great Sandrelli estate near Viterbo—a beautiful white wine—was sold to all and sundry in big, rush-covered flasks.

At the end of the corridor an old major-domo, whom I recognised as Michele, met me.

"Ah! Signor Heathwaite!" he exclaimed

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in Italian, welcoming me. "Why, how long is it since we saw you last?"

"Three years—when you were in London," I replied. "I want to see the Donna Stella."

"She came in half-an-hour ago, Signore. I will send Enrichetta to her." And he called a smart maid and gave her orders to tell the Prince's niece that I wished to see her.

Five minutes later I stood in a magnificent old-world apartment, with wonderful tapestries and sculptures—a room undreamt of by the casual visitor to Rome who never has an opportunity of seeing the home life of the most exclusive aristocracy in the world—and to me there came a merry, dark-eyed girl of twenty-two, with a typical Italian countenance.

"Well, Mr. Heathwaite!" she exclaimed in excellent English, for she had spent ten years at school at Eastbourne, "whatever brings you here? I'm so pleased to see you. Uncle has just come back from Viterbo. He is delighted to know that you are here. Come and see him. I've told him that you've called."

"No," I replied. "I'll see the Prince presently. I'm in a great fix, Signorina, and I want you to assist me," and I closed the door, which she had left open when she entered.

"Assist you! How? Of course I will," she laughed.

"Well, you recollect when you were in London three years ago—you remember that old man, Clément Filodor?"

"Filodor—the notorious Filodor?"

"Yes. Now you assisted me in keeping some observations upon him, and——"

"Yes, I did. He's a dangerous man."

"He is. And at the back of my mind I remember you once told me of a companion of his—a girl. Would you recognise her again if you saw her?"

Donna Stella, a smart figure in a dark blue gown edged with brown fur—a costume which bore the hall mark of the Rue de la Paix—reflected for a few moments.

"Yes—I believe I should," she said brightly.

"Very well. Will you help me? Filodor is here in Rome, and he is up to some serious mischief."

"Filodor in Rome! But I thought our Government would not allow him to re-enter Italy."

"Well, he's here, under the name of Ferdinando Pasquali, and the girl is with him. She calls herself Nicoletta."

"Then there is some deep plot, eh?—some clever political game," Stella said. "Don't forget, Mr. Heathwaite, that Filodor is hand-in-glove with that firebrand, Bonasi. The police are anxious to arrest him for an inflammatory speech he made in Genoa last week, but they are somehow deterred."

"Filodor and his friends are among the worst enemies of Great Britain," I said. "Why I have ventured to come to you, Signorina, is to seek your assistance in identifying this girl, Nicoletta."

"I'll do whatever I can in your interest, Mr. Heathwaite. As you know, I love England. Ah! how well I recollect my schoolgirl days at Eastbourne, our walks to the Wish Tower, and the concerts at the Devonshire Park! Our King urged my uncle to be Ambassador to your Court, but he has so many interests here at home. Come along and see my uncle, won't you?"

"Yes. But let's make an appointment. Meet me, if you can, at noon to-morrow in the lounge of the Hôtel de Russie. I'm staying there. Nobody will recognise you, for they are all foreign tourists, Cookites, and others."

She laughed.

"Yes. I'll be there."

"And dress as plainly as you can," I suggested. "You don't want to be recognised." I knew that the gay world of Rome all knew the pretty Donna Stella, who was so admired in the Court set, and held the appointment of one of the maids-of-honour to Her Majesty the Queen.

She took me to a small room lined with parchment-bound books—a library unchanged by two centuries of time—where at a table of carved oak the Prince was seated, writing.

He rose with his old-world courtliness of manner. He drew his heels together, and, bowing, said:

"I am extremely pleased to see you here, Signor Heathwaite. It is delightful to meet you again!"

He was over seventy, tall, thin, with a bald head and a small, scraggy moustache. No man in all Italy was more popular.

We sat down and chatted. He offered me a cigar, and a servant brought us coffee while we talked about the international situation, and he asked news of certain mutual friends in London.

"And why are you in Rome, Mr. Heathwaite?" he asked suddenly.

I smiled. What could I reply?

"Well—I am here on a little diplomatic mission," I said carelessly, for after the Armistice the Prince had been in London in connection with the Italian mission.

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"I hope, Mr. Heathwaite, you will dine with us *en famille*—will you? Stella will arrange it."

"Many thanks," I replied. "I shall be delighted."

"Will next Tuesday suit you?" asked the pretty girl.

"Quite well," was my reply, though I had no idea where I might be on the following Tuesday. I knew that I was on a desperate errand, and that the Prince's niece could, if she cared, be of the greatest assistance to me.

So it was arranged, and after we had smoked and chatted, I wished "*addio*" to the elegant old aristocrat—one of the few of the great nobility of Europe who remain—and Donna Stella accompanied me out.

"Tell me more about the man, Filodor. How did he get back to Italy, and what is he doing in Rome?" she asked.

"To discover what is in progress is the reason why I am in Rome," I answered.

"But if Filodor is here, then Enrico Bonasi cannot be very far away," she said. "We must find him. Before we can discover his motive for returning here, we must discover Bonasi."

Enrico Bonasi! The fellow was one of the most sly cosmopolitans in Europe.

Donna Stella was watching my countenance.

"Ah!" she laughed. "I see that you are puzzled, Mr. Heathwaite. The man is an enigma. But you have asked me to help you."

"Yes," I said eagerly. "And I know that you can assist me in this affair. You think that Bonasi must be in Rome?"

"Think! Why, I'm quite certain of it. If Filodor has dared to return at risk of going to serve his sentence of imprisonment for life which was pronounced in his absence, then Enrico Bonasi cannot be very far off. They always work in conjunction."

We spoke of the girl, Nicoletta, whereupon she said:

"I think I know something in that quarter. I will make it my business to find out. I am Italian, Mr. Heathwaite, and I hope I can be of service to my country against her enemies—as these people certainly are."

"They are enemies of your nation and of mine, Signorina," I said. "They mean mischief. They have their fingers upon the pulse of anarchy, and they are agitating for further unrest, not only in Italy, but in England."

"I know."

"And now I must go," I said, rising. "To morrow at the Hôtel de Russie—eh?"

"Yes," she answered, and then she walked with me to the end of the corridor, whence one of the Prince's footmen accompanied me down the stone steps into the old-world courtyard.

I was walking along the Corso towards my hotel, just beyond the Porta del Popolo, when, as I passed the ancient church of San Carlo al Corso, I came face to face with a girl—a girl of the people. In an instant I recognised her as the mysterious Nicoletta.

I, however, feared to turn and watch her. She did not know me, and I intended that she should not.

Now the combination of Filodor and Bonasi was a very formidable one. Filodor, *alias* Ferdinando Pasquali, the fiercest of all the Italian revolutionists, the man who conceived and carried out the terrible bomb outrage in a theatre in Naples one never to be forgotten night, when forty-seven people were killed and over two hundred injured, had been condemned to *ergastolo*, or solitary confinement for life. He had escaped from Italy, but the Assize Court at Naples had pronounced sentence upon him in his absence.

Bonasi was his most intimate associate. He had lived for seven years in a street off Tottenham Court Road, London, as an exile from Italy, but all the time he had been directing revolutionary propaganda in his own country.

Donna Stella, an intelligent girl imbued with the true patriotism of the old Italian aristocracy, knew all this, and more—and for that reason I had sought her aid.

At noon punctually next day she walked into the lounge of the Russie.

So quietly dressed was she that the foreign visitors sitting about probably believed her to be a lady's maid.

When we were together outside in the street she laughed merrily, and asked:

"Well, does my get-up suit you, Mr. Heathwaite?"

"Wonderful!" I declared. And then I asked her to assist me in watching the house where the notorious revolutionary was living in the Via Pontefici. It was not a long walk. Having passed the Casa Goethe and the church of Gesu e Maria, I left her, having arranged to meet her at four o'clock.

Donna Stella was a real go-ahead girl, and a great admirer of Britain. Though she was niece and hostess of one of the greatest of the Italian nobles, she believed in England and acknowledged what England had done in the war, and how our nation had saved the Veneto and its monuments from destruction.

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"We have some people, the French Ambassador and his wife, coming to tea. So I must be home by then," she said as we parted.

At four o'clock I called at the Palazzo Sandrelli, but the major-domo met me with the information that the Donna Stella had not returned.

"But the Signorina expects the French Ambassador to tea," I said.

"I know, Signore. His Excellency and his wife are here, but my young mistress has not returned."

I went away much puzzled. What could have happened?

That evening I became perturbed. My charming little friend had entered a very dangerous zone. That I knew. But was I to be blamed if anything untoward had happened to her? Yes, I was. I had no right to request her assistance in an affair with one of the most desperate and unscrupulous combines in Europe.

I returned to the palazzo at ten o'clock that night, but was informed that Donna Stella had not returned!

In the cold moonlight I wandered up the Monte Pincio past the water-clock, and around those drives which are so fashionable with the Romans at sunset. From the terrace I saw in the white moonshine the wonderful city with its churches and its cypresses, and the great dome of St. Peter's in the distance. Then I sat upon a stone seat, and over a cigarette I pondered.

What had happened to the Prince's niece?

Afterwards I went to the house in the Via Pontefici, but the windows of Filodor's apartments were in darkness. Indeed, not a light showed anywhere in the high building. The dark entry leading to the flight of stone stairs was without a door, as is usual in Italian houses of the lower class. Hence I found another dark entry nearly opposite, and for an hour stood huddled up in my overcoat watching in patience.

Ever and anon the dozens of church and convent bells of Rome clanged out into the clear air, while now and then a taxi flashed along the Corso, but in that narrow, old-world street which led down to the muddy Tiber not a soul was to be seen.

That Donna Stella had kept the house under observation was certain, but whither had she gone?

I waited, half-frozen, till nearly two o'clock in the morning, when suddenly a big private car turned from the Corso and drew up at the house I was watching. The chauffeur threw himself off his seat and clapped his half-frozen hands. It was evident that he had come a long journey. At the same time a middle-aged woman descended from the car and said some words to the driver. At that moment the woman's face came into the zone of feeble light from the street lamp, and I recognised it. It was the clean-shaven face of Enrico Bonasi!

The Prince's niece had been correct in her surmise. Bonasi was still associated with the notorious Filodor. But what troubled me most was the girl's unaccountable disappearance.

Having witnessed the great revolutionist's arrival in woman's garb — no doubt to deceive the octroi guards and police-post at the city gates—I returned again to the Russie, where my inquiries of the *concierge* whether there had been any message for me were met with a negative.

All next day I waited. Donna Stella gave no sign.

I went to the Palazzo Sandrelli and from old Michele heard how much concerned the Prince was regarding his niece's absence.

"His Excellency intends to inform the police," said the stately major-domo.

"Try to persuade him against such a course," I urged. "Surely he need not court publicity? No doubt the young lady is safe enough somewhere, and cannot either telegraph or telephone."

"I have already urged His Excellency to remain patient a little longer," answered the faithful old retainer. "We do not want the affair to get into the papers."

But what I had said was certainly not what I thought. I dreaded to think what might happen to the patriotic girl if she were discovered watching those desperate plotters. If they suspected their secret had leaked out, then they would hesitate at nothing. That some fierce and most dangerous plot was in progress was now quite plain. But its nature was still obscure.

The whole of that day I spent in wildest apprehension. I went to the Barile, both for luncheon and dinner, but Filodor and his nurse did not come. The intervening hours I spent watching the house in the Via Pontefici, but without result. Probably Bonasi feared to be seen in Rome lest he should be recognised by the police.

Two further days dragged by. At last I could stand it no longer. Therefore I put on the very faded and threadbare suit I usually carried with me, which has so often stood me in good stead, and just as it was growing dark I climbed the ill-kept stone steps which led to Filodor's apartment.

Through a gimlet-hole in the door hung a piece of string, which I pulled, and a bell

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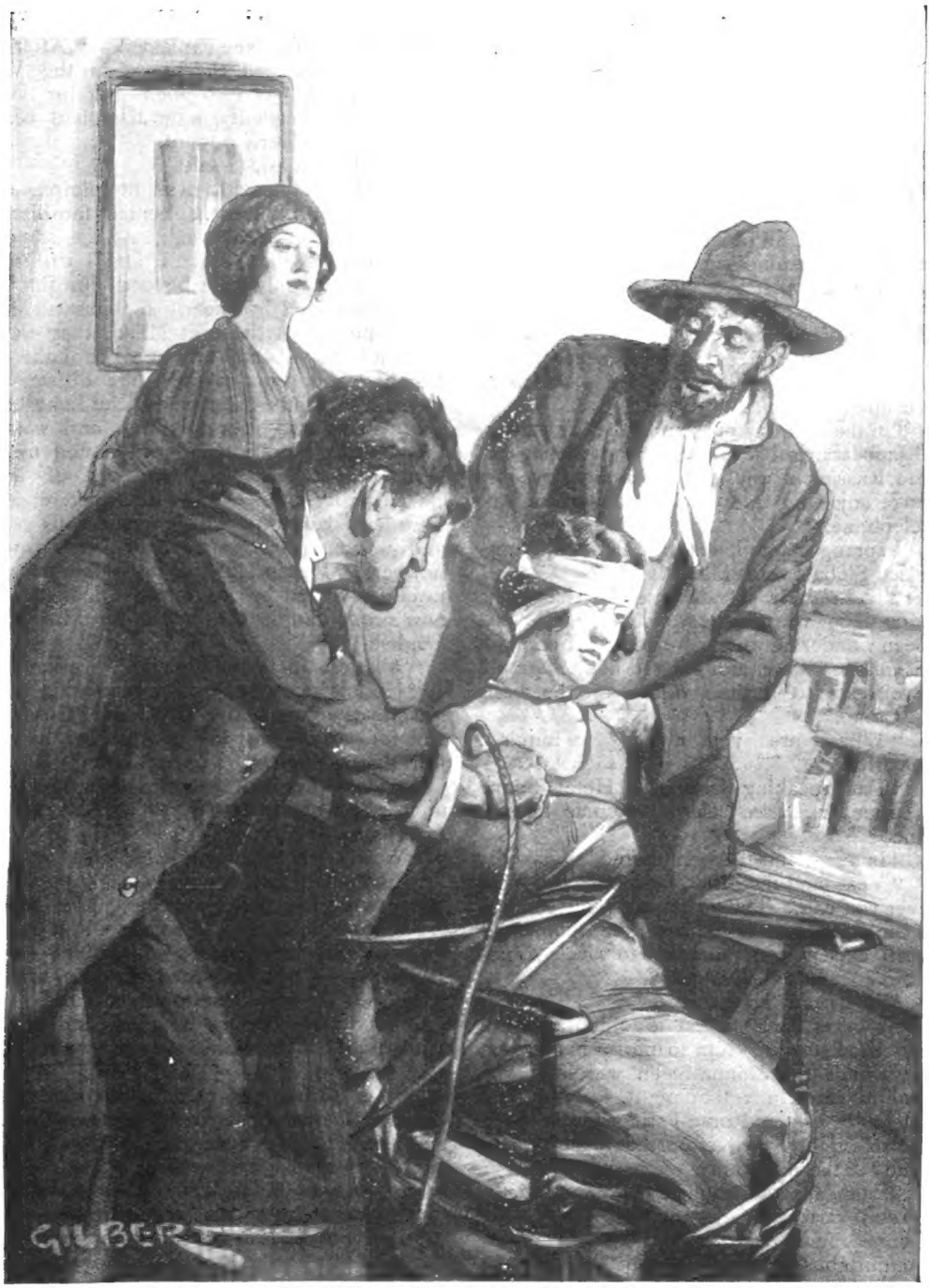

The plotters had . . . already bound my little friend hand and foot, and while Nicoletta stood by they had placed a thin cord about her neck and were preparing to strangle her.

[*Page 305, col. 2.*]

tinkled within. Presently I heard a shuffling of feet upon bare boards, and a man threw the door open.

It was Bonasi!

"Signora Fera?" I inquired very innocently.

"She does not live here," was the fellow's gruff reply.

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He was about to close the door, when I asked:

"But Signorina Nicoletta—her niece? Is she here?"

"No. She has left Rome," he answered abruptly.

I longed to ask for Signor Pasquali, but I feared to do so. Therefore I thanked him, and, turning away, descended the steps.

I had had an object in making that call, and I had accomplished it—as well as learning the fact that the girl Nicoletta was no longer there. My object was to obtain a glimpse of the lock on the door of the flat. I had seen it, and noted its size and make, in case I wished to enter the place in its occupiers' absence.

On the fifth day of Donna Stella's strange disappearance I was seated in the lounge of the Russie, a prey to great anxiety, when a page-boy told me I was wanted on the telephone.

I sprang up, and, entering the box, recognised Stella's voice instantly.

"Hullo, Mr. Heathwaite!" she cried, though her voice was very faint. "Have you been wondering where I've got to? I couldn't telephone before, and I dared not telegraph. I've been to a little village on the Lake of Como."

"Where are you now?" I inquired eagerly.

"I'm speaking from the Hotel Bonne Femme, in Turin. Can you come here at once?"

"Is our friend Clément there?" I asked.

"Yes—and the girl. So leave as soon as ever you can. Things are growing serious. I can't tell you more over the 'phone. I shall expect you here to-morrow. *Arivederci!*" she added cheerily.

And I heard no more.

At once I telephoned to old Michele at the palazzo telling him to inform his master, the Prince, that Donna Stella was in Turin, and at ten o'clock that night I was in the *wagon-lit* of the Rome-Paris express going North on its way across the great marshlands of the Maremma.

At ten next morning I drove out of the station yard at Turin to the old-fashioned Bonne Femme, one of the few really comfortable inns remaining in Europe. Its reputation for a century has remained unchanged, though it is little known to the foreigner, who prefers the more garish establishments with their inferior pretended French cooking.

On entering I inquired for my good-looking lady friend, and a few minutes later we were alone in one of the sitting-rooms.

"Ah! Mr. Heathwaite! I have had great adventures," she explained. "After I left you I watched the house in the Via Pontefici. At two o'clock Filodor and the girl left hurriedly, after they had been visited by an elderly woman."

"Ah! Bonasi," I said.

"Well, I only caught a slight glimpse of her face, and somehow it seemed familiar," she went on. "I followed. At the station they took tickets to Milan, and I did the same. I had only what I stood upright in, but fortunately I had nearly a thousand lire in my purse. Arrived at Milan, they went on to a little villa at Torno, on the Lake of Como. I put up at the Villa d'Este, at Cernobbio, on the other side of the Lake, but I was able to cross several times and watch them. At the villa they were visited by a man, who I discovered was one of the Bolshevik leaders. At the villa conferences were held daily with certain mysterious men and women, who seemed to arrive from nowhere. Filodor, instead of being a fragile invalid attended by his nurse, Nicoletta, is now strong and in the best of health," she laughed.

"Where is the strange man?" I asked.

"He left here last night for England. He stayed yesterday at the Hôtel de l'Europe, and fortunately left his address for letters with the hall porter. I have it here."

And from her hand I took a piece of paper upon which she had scribbled an address in Liverpool.

"Well? What is intended?" I asked.

"Evidently the revolutionary party in Italy intend to cause trouble," she said. "Filodor and the girl Nicoletta—who is, I have discovered, Bonasi's daughter — are staying with a woman named Gariglio, in the Via Carlo Alberto, close to the station."

We lunched together later on, and afterwards held consultation as to how we should next act.

It was during our confidential chat that newsboys began crying the *Gazetta* excitedly. Sensational events were happening all over Italy, it seemed. The workers had suddenly seized many of the most important factories.

The first step towards revolution had thus been gained. Filodor and Bonasi had effected a *coup* which had staggered the Government, while the mysterious stranger was on his way back to England, where, as we afterwards found, a similar plot had been formed by Bonasi before leaving.

That night, while I kept watch upon Filodor, or Ferdinando Pasquali, as he now called himself, Donna Stella turned her attention to the girl, Nicoletta.

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The streets of Turin were filled with dangerous rioters, and in the wild demonstration outside the motor works we became separated. In the crush Filodor disappeared; but later on, outside the great railway works at the corner of the Corso Castelfidario, I saw Bonasi, wild and perspiring, haranguing the crowd and inciting them to outrage and murder.

Again I feared for Donna Stella. Therefore I disengaged myself from the crowd which the military were trying to clear from the streets, and went round to the address she had given me in the Via Carlo Alberto—the house where Filodor was living.

At two o'clock in the morning, when all was quiet again, I watched Filodor and Bonasi, in fear of the Turin police who were searching everywhere for them, creep along in the shadow and slip into the dark entry which led to the flat where Filodor lived in secret.

Later I was watching for the appearance of the girl, Nicoletta, when I saw her walking with Donna Stella! They were in excited conversation. The pair had evidently met during the rioting. Stella's face had been injured, for it was bandaged, and the kind-hearted Nicoletta was taking her to her home!

In an instant I suspected that a trap had been prepared. Once within that house the Prince's niece, whom the conspirators had no doubt recognised as having been engaged in watching them, would fare badly, and in all probability lose her life.

Those two men were most desperate characters, and held life cheaply where their secrets were involved.

I saw them enter the place. Then I dashed out around to the railway station and alarmed the police on duty there. Ten stalwart men accompanied me. We arrived there only in the nick of time, for as we burst into the place the plotters had, we found, already bound my little friend hand and foot, and while Nicoletta stood by they had placed a thin cord about her neck and were preparing to strangle her.

Bonasi instantly drew a revolver and fired point blank at one of the police agents, shooting him dead, while Filodor, finding himself cornered, also fired. The pair of conspirators then fought in desperation for their lives, but in the end both were shot down by the police, Filodor being killed outright and Bonasi only living for half-an-hour.

The Italian censor forbade any mention of the exciting affair in the papers, hence readers in England knew nothing of the cause of the great revolution which was planned to take place in Italy or the true reason of its sudden collapse.

But when that interesting personage, the Bolshevik leader, set foot on British soil at Folkestone, he found himself at once in the hands of the police, in accordance with a telegram which I had sent to Downing Street. He is still in prison at this moment, and will not be released for a good many years to come.

Donna Stella married a most excellent young fellow, the Marchese di Ceriana, a few months ago, and they have gone to Washington, where her husband is, or was, at the Italian Embassy.

TO COQUETTE.

They say you have no heart, coquette,
(Perhaps they speak the truth!)
I only know your laughing eyes
Awoke me from a world of sighs,
And gave me back my youth.

They say you have no soul, coquette,
(Well, *they* are old and grey!)
I only know your dimpled smile
Dispersed my gloomy thoughts awhile,
And gave me yesterday.

They say you have no brains, coquette,
(A foolish child, it seems!)
I only know your soft embrace
Redeemed a world divorced from grace,
And gave me back my dreams.

Dorothy Rose.

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SOCIAL OBLIGATIONS.

The profiteer's wife was explaining to her friend at the Brighton hotel that she had just bought two beautiful fur coats.

"But why do you want two?" asked the friend.

"Oh," said the woman, "I couldn't possibly visit in the same fur coat as I shop in."

SOON SETTLED.

A stage-struck youth had pestered a manager for a hearing, and at last got one.

"Tell me," commenced the manager, "do you aspire to comedy or tragedy?"

"Tragedy," bleated the youth.

"Well, let me hear you recite something."

Striking an absurd pose the aspirant began: "To be or not to be——"

"Not to be, undoubtedly," said the manager, showing him out.

PAYING THE PENALTY.

ART CONNOISSEUR: "Where did you get this daub?"

FRIEND: "I picked it up in a studio; said something nice about it out of politeness, and the artist gave it to me."

ART CONNOISSEUR (sadly): "Ah, you can't be too careful."

MILITANT METHODS.

"I didn't have a very nice time at Elsie's," little Vera announced on her return home. "She was as cross as could be; she wouldn't let me play with her doll or touch one of her playthings."

"Well," replied her mother, "when I was your age, had I gone to see a little friend who would not let me touch her playthings, I should have come straight home."

"I never thought of that," Vera replied after due reflection. "I slapped her face and stayed."

THE POINT OF VIEW.

They were on their honeymoon and were spending it amidst the mountains of Switzerland. Flushed with triumph, parched and scant of breath, they had at last gained the summit of a lofty peak. Then they paused.

"There!" exclaimed the wife when she had finished panting. "We have tramped all this distance to admire this beautiful view and we've forgotten the glasses!"

"Never mind, darling," replied the husband, taking a small flask out of his pocket. "There's no one about. We can drink just as well out of the bottle."

THE MINOR POET.

I'm a very minor poet,
And the Editors all know it;
I have tried them with my quatrains, with my odes, and my rondeaux.
But I have this consolation:
Though my verse lacks approbation,
I'm beloved by paper-makers, and, of course, the G.P.O.

E. B. Everett.

DRAWING A BLANK.

The day was hot, the hour rapidly approaching closing time, and the salesman thoroughly worn out.

Still, he was a good salesman, and the customer before him—a lady faultlessly attired in next year's fashions—had all the appearance of being a profitable patron.

Cheerfully he unrolled and re-rolled piece after piece of linoleum for inspection, but all to no purpose. Nothing, it seemed, could satisfy her.

"I'm extremely sorry, madam," said the salesman, "but I'm afraid I've shown you all the linoleums I have in stock. Of course, I can get some more up from our factory, if you care to call again to-morrow——"

"Yes," broke in the customer; "perhaps I'd better leave it at that. You see, I want quite a small design—something suitable for the floor of a canary cage."

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POOR BUT PROUD.

The benevolent old lady had listened to the cadger's well-told tale and had produced the necessary shilling.

"You poor man!" she sighed. "And are you married?"

"Married, indeed!" he snorted, as he moved off. "Do you think if I had a wife I'd be relying for support on total strangers?"

A MIXED DIET.

FIRST SEAMAN: "I say, Bill, what is this card?"

SECOND SEAMAN: "That's the saloon passengers' menu, of course."

"But what does it mean?"

"Oh, it means they get their soup, fish, meat, and vegetables separately and call it a menu. In the forecastle we get them all together and call it Irish stew."

HONOURS DIVIDED.

Nurse, when clearing away tea from the nursery, had overlooked a sugared cake, of which she had allowed Jack and Jill to have only one little piece each.

When she returned the cake was gone.

"Jack!" she cried reproachfully, "you have taken cake behind my back. I didn't think it was in you."

"Part of it," said Jack, "is in Jill."

BON VOYAGE!

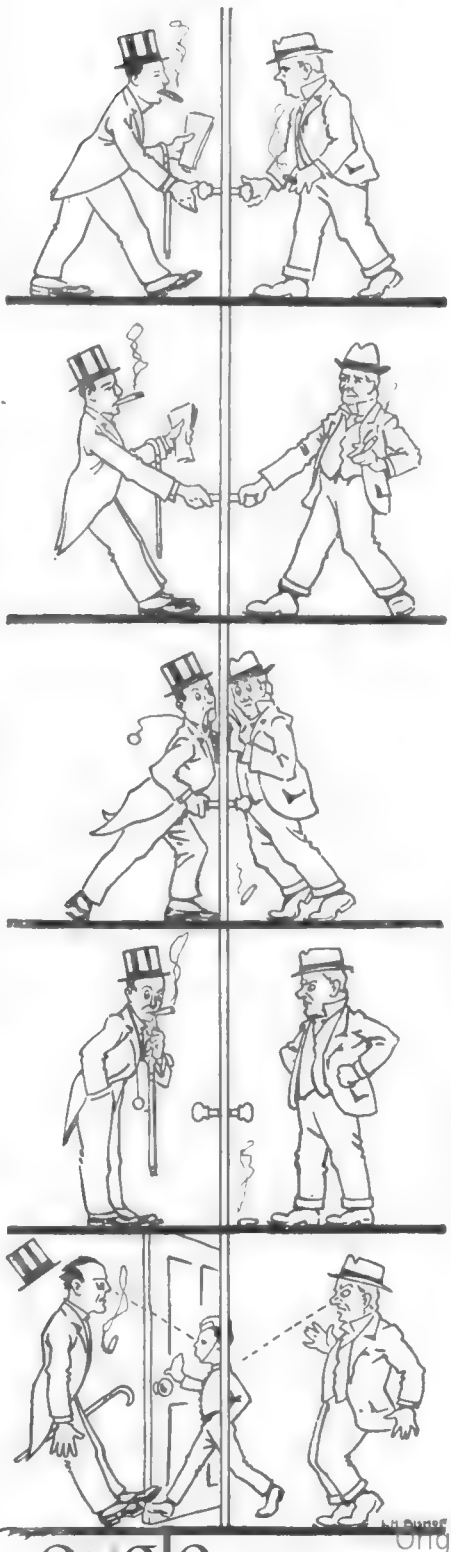
The Scotch express was steaming out of the London terminus when a commotion was observed at the barrier.

Hatless and dishevelled, a man emerged from the crowd and tore wildly up the platform. Frantically clutching at a carriage door, he opened it and flung himself headlong inside.

Hastily recovering his feet, he popped his head out of the window, and yelled to a porter: "Say, am I right for Finchley?"

"Yes, sir; change at Edinburgh," came the cheerful reply.

DRAT THAT DOOR!



A FAMILY LIKENESS

"You look like an idiot," thundered the disgusted man to his spendthrift son, just returned from college. "You look more like an idiot every day."

Just then an acquaintance of the old gentleman entered the office and saw the youth.

"Hello, Charlie, back, eh?" exclaimed the visitor. "You're looking more like your father every day."

"Yes," said Charlie, "that's what the governor's just been telling me."

FOUR DEEP.

A careless, absent-minded traveller was asked to stay a few days at a country house. His wife, realising that he was to be the lion of the party, told him to be sure to put on a clean shirt every evening. She packed him one for each night. When he returned she said:

"Well, I hope you remembered to put on a clean shirt every night."

"Oh, yes," said he. "At this moment, counting the one I went away in, I've got four on."

A REGULAR JOB.

An old man had been working on a farm since he was twelve years old. When he was eighty-three his young master suggested it was time he retired from active service.

The old man stared in surprise, and said:

"Well, I've bin working on this farm seventy-one years now. I worked for your grandfeyther. I worked for your feyther, and now I'm working for you, and you wants to sack me. If I'd a-known it wasn't goin' to be a regular job, I'd never have taken it on."

CASH TRANSACTIONS.

"Perkins is the finest after-dinner speaker I have ever heard."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; he always says: 'Waiter, give that bill to me.'"

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Plumbing for Pleasure :

An Engrossing Pastime for the Winter Months.

By Ashley Sterne.

By the time the plumber has assembled his mate, his mate's mate and his tools, the water is pouring on to the grand piano in the drawing-room.

Now that the long winter evenings are once more close upon us we are confronted with the ever-perplexing problem of how to employ them. Father, with his three Masonic Lodges and two Worshipful City Companies, is happily catered for, as for him the winter months are pleasantly punctuated with a succession of indigestible banquets, the eating of which and recovering from the same serve to pass the time congenially enough.

Mother, too, will work as strenuously as ever in a laudable endeavour to get at least one of her daughters off before the fox-trot goes out of fashion, while the girls themselves will all be perpetually making jumpers.

There remain only the young men of the family to consider, and to them I offer the humble suggestion that plumbing as a winter pastime provides allurement both useful and amusing. To be able to mend a burst water-pipe or a leaking gas-tube is an accomplishment which few people outside the plumbing profession possess or care to cultivate; hence the plumber is regarded with a kind of superstitious reverence, as if he were endowed with some superhuman gift or virtue which it is beyond the power of the ordinary person to attain.

But this is sheer fallacy; for, after all, plumbing is only stopping up a hole, than which there is nothing easier once the hole has been located. This truism grasped, all that is needed for the veriest tyro to become an expert and highly-respected plumber is a little common-sense, a plumb-line, a few pounds of putty, and possibly a dog specially trained to scent out leaks—just as there are dogs specially trained to scent out truffles. Then the services of the professional plumber can be dispensed with, with much saving of time, temper and money.

Everybody has experienced the farce of sending for the plumber. The hot-water cistern, let us say, has been burst by the frost, and is rapidly disgorging its contents all over the floor. Little drops of water and little grains of zinc are percolating through, and falling into the best bedroom. The crisis is getting very critical when the plumber, who has been urgently summoned an hour ago, puts in a belated appearance. He at once takes in the situation, goes back for his tools and that mysterious individual known as a "plumber's mate," and meanwhile the water has dissolved the best bedroom and is falling through the floor in a monotonous cascade on to the grand piano in the drawing-room.

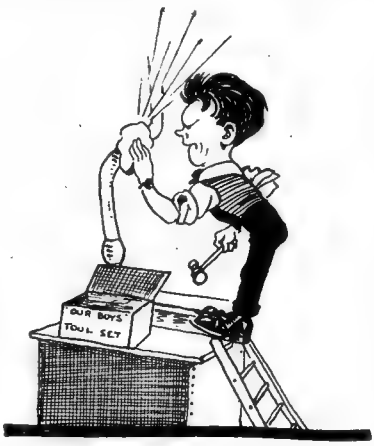
After another hour the plumber returns with tools and mate, the latter urging that this 'ere's a job requiring the services not only of his own tools (which he hasn't brought, of course) but also of a plumber's mate's mate; and by the time all these individuals have eventually assembled you find that the hour is 1 p.m., and the day is Wednesday, which means that the job cannot be taken in hand that day because the Amalgamated Union of Plumbers, Plumbers' Mates, and Plumbers' Mates' Mates decree that no plumbing work shall be done after 1 p.m. on Wednesdays.

And so, of course, your house is ultimately washed away, forcing you either to emigrate or enter the workhouse.

Yet all this bother could be avoided if some member of the family adopted plumbing as a hobby.

Then, no sooner is the hot-water cistern reported burst than Reggie promptly gets out Our Boys' Box of Tools and some putty, and repairs to the scene of the disaster.

Carefully gauging the extent of the burst with his plumb-line, he selects a piece of putty large enough to cover the orifice and take up the back-lash, slaps it in place, and affixes it with a few tintacks, or a little solder, or—failing these—a strip or two of stamp-paper. The whole job is thus over and done with almost before the first drops of water from the leak have had time to comply with the law of gravity and fall to the floor.



No sooner is the hot-water cistern reported burst than Reggie . . . repairs to the scene of the disaster.

Gas-escapes, too, may be similarly treated, though care must naturally be taken that in searching for the leak the amateur plumber does not meet a stuffy end through asphyxiation. A simple precaution which I earnestly recommend is to carry a few white mice in the pocket, as these charming little rodentia possess the peculiar and amusing property of fainting or developing slight hysteria when in the presence of raw gas. The proximity of the leak can hence be readily ascertained, and after stopping up the hole in the manner already described it only remains to revive the white mice by loosening their clothing and administering artificial respiration.

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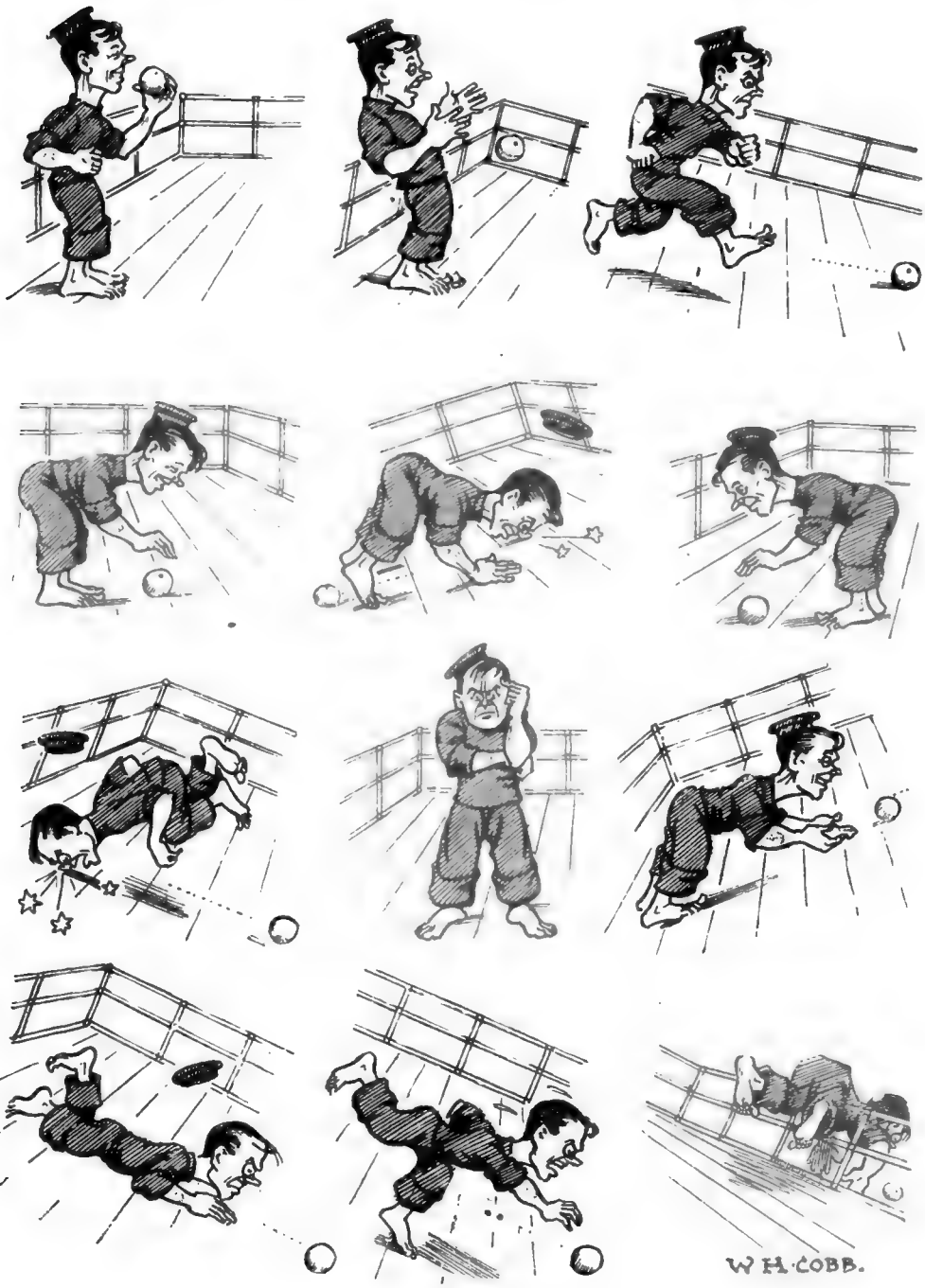
MAN OVERBOARD!

How Jack Tar's Passion for Fru't Led Him to a Watery Grave



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PAST INDISCRETIONS.

"Why, John, what do you mean by burning your old love-letters?"

"I have been reading them, my dear, and I've come to the conclusion that after I die anyone who wishes to contest my will might get hold of them and use them to prove I was insane."

A SPORTING OFFER.

"Can you tell me the names of the twelve Apostles, Sam?" said the pretty Sunday-school teacher one morning.

Sam's face fell, and he shifted his weight from one foot to the other.

"Can't do it, miss," he said sorrowfully, and then his eyes brightened, "but I can tell you the names of the M.C.C. team wot's gone to Australia."

A HEATED ARGUMENT.

A villager had been confiding to a country clergyman some of the shortcomings of her husband.

"Certainly," agreed the clergyman, "he seems to treat you rather unkindly. But remember that you took him for better or for worse."

"Well, it has always been for worse, so far as I can see," replied the lady, dabbing at her eyes with a grubby handkerchief.

"Have you ever tried heaping coals of fire on his head?" inquired the clergyman.

"No, I haven't," she answered, grateful for the new suggestion. "So far, I've only tried hot water."

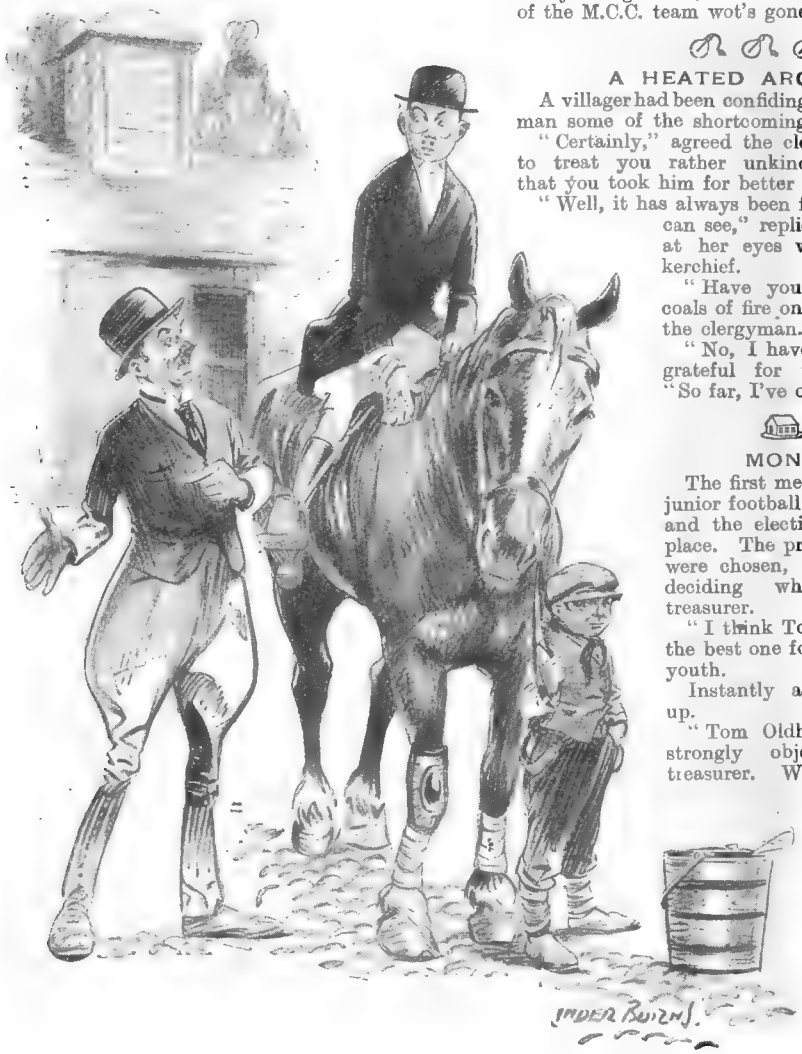
MONEY FLIES.

The first meeting of the proposed junior football club was being held and the election of officers taking place. The president and secretary were chosen, and they were now deciding who should act as treasurer.

"I think Tom Oldham would be the best one for the job," said one youth.

Instantly another one jumped up.

"Tom Oldham!" he said. "I strongly object to his being treasurer. Why, he's the fastest runner amongst us!"



QUITE AN OVATION!

DEALER: "Luv yer, sir, when yer git 'im 'ome there'll be the Lidy Heva an' the Lidy Hangelina sittin' on the balcony, and as yer go up the hancestral drive the Lidy Hangelina will say to the Lidy Heva: 'Blime, Heva, if there ain't the Lord Halgernon a-comin' up the avenoo sittin' on a bloomin' peacock!'"

DON'T DISILLUSION HIM.

MABEL: "He says he thinks I am the nicest girl in the place. Shall I ask him to call?"

MADGE: "No, dear—let him keep on thinking so."

HARD LABOUR.

"What do you want?" demanded Mr. Newlywed, as he confronted the tramp at the door of his little week-end cottage. "Breakfast or work?"

"Both, sir," the wayfarer replied.

"H'm!" said Mr. Newlywed, and disappeared.

Presently he returned, carrying a large hunk of steak pie. "Then eat that," he exclaimed savagely, "and you'll have both!"

TAKING WAYS.

A lady was discussing a house-party that she had recently given.

"You know," she said, "Mrs. B. came, but she was a great nuisance. She has such a passion for souvenirs. She's mad on collecting."

"My dear," said her friend, "no need to tell me that; she stayed with me once, to my cost."

"I suppose you missed some china, or something when she left?"

"No, I missed my husband."

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The Man Who Married His Cook.

By Edgar Wallace.

Illustrated by Thomas Henry.

One afternoon in May, in such a season as the mind of youth turns upon tender matters, Professor Tremlow interrupted his study of *dactylopterus volitans* and sat staring in his absent way at a piece of yellow paper outspread upon the desk before him.

He remained in this attitude for the greater part of ten minutes; then he rose, walked slowly across the threadbare carpet which covered the floor of his study, and gazed upon himself in the mirror which overhung the mantelpiece. Whether he remained staring at the lined face, the horn-rimmed spectacles, and the thin, grey-shot beard for more than a second is doubtful. It happened that, perched upon the frame, was a peculiarly interesting specimen of May-fly. He did not think of this tiny stranger as a May-fly, but automatically placed it within the *pseudo-neuroptera* sub order *of Orthoptera*.

He was back at his desk before he realised that he had not taken stock of himself, and sighed. He got up again and walked to the mantelpiece, forgot what he had risen for, and pushed the bell which was embedded in the wall.

His one man-servant answered and found the professor with his short-sighted eyes glued to the treatise he was writing.

"You rang, sir?"

Professor Tremlow blinked up.

"Eh?" he said, startled. "What do you want, Thomas—William?"

"Ernest, sir," said the patient butler. "You rang."

"Did I?" The professor sat up and screwed up his forehead. "Yes—yes—cook—tell the cook I want to see her."

"Certainly, sir," said Ernest, and went kitchenward, hoping.

"Wants *me*?" said Mary Ann, paling a little.

She was a plump, red-faced woman with small eyes, and had kept her family for ten years on the overplus from the professor's kitchen. She had a conscience, it seemed, for there had been butcher's bills throughout Lent.

"It's my day out, too. How did he know I was back?"

"Gawd knows!" answered Ernest piously.

She slipped off her best coat and put an apron over her best skirt, patted her hair before the kitchen mirror, and pattered out.

"If Willie knew what I knew about the grocer's account," said Ernest to the kitchen-maid, "he'd take that old geezer and kick her into the middle of next week."

The professor's name was William, and, did Ernest but know, he was at that precise moment planning to kick his cook into the middle of next week—figuratively.

The professor swung round in his chair as the cook came in, the chair having been designed for such an operation, and he glared at Mary Ann Dobbs in so ferocious a manner that the poor woman had a cold feeling in her stomach and speculated frantically upon who had turned traitor. Was it the coal-man or the religious Mr. Smith, the grocer? Such is the sceptic tendency of modern thought that she had unjustly condemned a good Christian man when the professor spoke.

"Er—Martha——" he began.

"Mary Ann," smirked the cook apologetically.

"Oh, yes, Mary Ann. I knew it was a Biblical name. Er—sit down, Mary Ann."

In all the ten years she had preyed upon the professor, he had never asked her to sit down, and she obeyed quakingly.

"You have been with me several weeks now," he began. "When was it you came?"

"Ten years ago last February," said Mary Ann gently.

"Indeed, indeed!" said the absent-

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minded professor. "Yes, of course, it was ten years ago."

He ruminated, looking down at his boots for some time, and then:

"Clara," he said, "I have decided to get married."

She gasped. That meant an end to all her forays and barratries.

"I have decided to get married," said the professor in a tone of surprise, as though he had only just realised what a remarkable decision he had reached.

"I want somebody who is faithful to me, Alice—Clara, I mean."

"Mary Ann," murmured the cook faintly.

"Somebody who knows my ways," said the professor. "I am not a young man, I am not a rich man, Mary," he said, and added, "Ann" with an effort.

"No, sir," said the wondering Mary Ann.

"I cannot give you the—er—affection and demonstrations of affection which are peculiar to the youthful mammal."

"Me, sir?" Mary Ann got up, her mouth open, and the professor nodded.

"But I can give you my name. I can make you Mrs.—er—er——"

"Tremlow," squeaked Mary Ann, mouth and heart at their widest.

"My lawyer shall come down—I have been trying all day to remember his name—and he shall fix—er—a mutual deed of gift. That will be—er—more satisfactory, Annie—Clara, I mean."

Mary Ann said nothing, but swallowed hard.

"I believe in community of interest," said the professor, "er—that is all, Clara," and he waved her out of existence.

Mary Ann went down to the kitchen like a woman in a dream and gave the kitchen-maid notice.

Next day came a lawyer, who fixed deeds of gift and settlement, bestowing upon Mrs. Tremlow-to-be one-half of the professor's fortune, amounting to nearly £500, some well-worn furniture, and his copyrights in three volumes dealing with the science of Zootomy.

She, for her part, gave him a half-right in two silk dresses, certain other articles of wear, a cameo brooch and two gold drop ear-rings, and such other property as she might acquire.

They were married by a horrified curate of souls and Ernest gave the professor away. He would have preferred giving the new Mrs. Tremlow away.

A week later, despite his attachment to the house and fortune of Professor Tremlow, Ernest came to the professor's study and asked for his wages. Mechanically the professor paid him a full month, not realising that he had paid him a full month only the week before.

"I'm going, sir," said Ernest, with a tremor in his voice.

"That's right, shut the door," said the professor.

"I'm leaving your employment, sir," said Ernest.

Professor Tremlow looked round in astonishment. If Ernest had said that he was developing into a chrysalis, the professor would not have been astonished, because such things happen.

"Going, Thomas?" he said mildly. "Going to leave me, Thomas?"

"Yes, sir," said Ernest, not troubling to correct his master. "I can't stand the missus."

The professor looked at him over his spectacles and through his spectacles. He lifted his glasses to his forehead and looked at him under his spectacles. Then he sighed and turned to the table.

"She's a good cook, Thomas, a very good cook. I think you will admit that?"

"She's roasted us all right," said Ernest bitterly.

"You must be patient—er—I don't know your name—you must be patient. William, isn't it? She's a woman of character, is Mary Ann—er—I'm married to her. You should study patience, study the bees, Thomas!"

Ernest choked.

"She's a proper bee, she is," he said with a trace of venom. "She's made this 'ive 'um."

"Well, it's a great pity, a very great pity—Snellgrove is your name, isn't it?"

"Marshall, sir, Ernest Marshall."

The professor nodded.

"I knew it was something to do with tobacco."

And then it was that Mrs. Tremlow flounced in, and Mrs. Tremlow, at the sight of Ernest, trembled with wrath.

"What are you nosing and prying round my 'usband for?" she demanded.

"I have come for my wages, madam," replied Ernest, emphasising the "madam" so that it was almost an offensive word.

Her little eyes screwed up till they were almost invisible.

"You're leaving, eh? A lady can't go into her own kitchen but the servants give notice." She jerked her thumb to the door. "Push off!" said Mrs. Tremlow, and followed him to the door. "Go 'ome and take your mother out of the workhouse!" she

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He ruminated, looking down at his boots for some time, and then: "Clara," he said, "I have decided to get married."

advised him humorously. "If I had a face like yours, I'd have the gas cut off."

The professor, roused by voices pitched higher than the ordinary, turned.

"Are you saying good-bye, my love?" he asked.

Mrs. Tremlow had come stalking back, fists on hips, triumphant.

"My brother is coming to-day," she said brusquely, and rather wondered how he would take the news.

Professor Tremlow accepted the tidings in the same spirit as he would have accepted the news that there was a rainbow in the sky or that a flight of locusts had fallen upon the kitchen garden.

"How interesting," he said vaguely. "So you have a brother, and I think you told me you had a mother, too! That's remarkable."

He took up his pen and wrote a few words, and she watched him in silence.

"Look here!" she said desperately "Willie!"

"Willie?" said the professor in amazement.

"That's your name, isn't it?" She was not quite sure of herself.

"Yes, I think it is," said the professor, "but you may continue to call me Mr. Tremlow as heretofore."

She seated herself upon the identical chair on which she had received the marriage proposal.

"I can't make you out," she said. "Of course, I know these things happen in books, Willie—Mr. Tremlow—a gentleman married beneath himself, so to speak; but I don't understand why you married your cook."

"Ah, yes," nodded the professor, "a very good cook."

"Mind you," said Mrs. Tremlow, "I'm not expecting you to gush over my relations. They ain't the kind of people you would gush over, anyway, but Tom's a very nice-spoken young fellow, and you needn't see him if you don't want to."

The professor did not reply. He had

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reached the interesting stage in his monograph on *chocrocampa tersa* where the caterpillar develops into the *pupæ suspensæ*, which is analogous to that stage in the cinema film where the murderer is discovered to be, not the masked butler, but the bishop, whom nobody suspected, except the people who had seen the film before.

She had other things to say about her relations, for she felt it wise to prepare him for Tom, who had not reached the stage of sartorial refinement where he was prepared to abandon his variegated choker and adopt the white dicky of civilisation. But she missed her chance.

A tall man was ushered into the room by the new housemaid, and he greeted Mrs. Tremlow with that geniality which is part of the stock-in-trade of the family lawyer.

"Well, Mrs. Tremlow," he said, with a smile, "you are settling down, I see. Have you quite got used to the new life?"

The professor turned his head.

"Bless my life, Still!" he said, and looked at his watch. "It's half-past five, and you said you weren't coming until Tuesday. You know my cook?"

"Your wife, Willie," said Mrs. Tremlow with gentle savagery.

"Yes, yes," said the professor hastily. "My wife, to be sure."

"I have met you lots of times, Mrs. Tremlow," said Still, putting down his bag and snapping open the catch.

Mary Ann smiled archly.

"You're the gentleman who used to like my apple fritters," she said.

"A very good cook," murmured the professor, his pen poised in his hand.

"I see I am not going to get anything out of you," laughed Still, and walked to the long French windows which afforded a view of the professor's restricted demesne.

"I suppose you were surprised, Mr. Still?" Mary Ann joined him and lowered her voice, though there seemed no necessity for this precaution. "It was a bit of a surprise to me."

"I expect it was," said Still, who had been concerned in so many divorce cases, criminal conspiracies, and actions to restrain nuisances that he was surprised at nothing.

Mary Ann coughed, feeling that her own condescension called for a word of approval.

"He's a bit old in the tooth, you understand, Mr. Still, but I've lost a lot of chances through being too particular."

Mr. Still was staring out into the garden.

"Your husband is under sixty," he protested in a spirit of loyalty to his client. "His father lived to eighty-nine and his grandfather was ninety-three when he was killed in a wrestling match."

Mrs. Tremlow's jaw dropped.

"You're a ray of sunshine, ain't you?" she said, and Still laughed.

"He's very much in love with you, isn't he, Mrs. Tremlow?" he asked, as he began to sort out the contents of his bag.

Mary Ann sniffed.

"I wouldn't say that. You see, it is a sort of morganatic marriage."

"A what?" asked the startled lawyer.

"I mean," said Mrs. Tremlow, whose knowledge of the English language was hazy, "he might be Johnny Morgan, so far as I am concerned."

Still shot a swift glance towards the bowed head of the professor, and Mary Ann sniffed again.

"Oh, don't worry about him;" she said. "When he gets into his books he's as deaf as a bat."

"I'm rather glad of that, Mrs. Tremlow, for I want to speak very plainly. May I?"

"Plain speaking is my vice," said Mary Ann truthfully.

"Well, I'm going to be frank." The lawyer was half-serious and half-humorous. "I have known you led the professor a—er—well, not the cheeriest of lives as his cook. When I came down here two years ago to look into his affairs, I found that you had been systematically—er——"

"Say overcharging him," said Mary Ann placidly. "It sounds better. Well, I admit that. A girl has got to look after herself in this world, Mr. Still, and I hadn't any idea that I was going to get my chance. A girl throws away lots of opportunities."

"A girl!" said the puzzled Mr. Still. "What girl are you talking about?"

"Me," said Mrs. Tremlow with some asperity.

"Oh, yes, I suppose so. You used to twist him rather round your finger, Mrs. Tremlow."

Mrs. Tremlow smiled proudly.

"And yet," mused the lawyer, "he knew this and married you?"

Mary Ann drew a long breath.

"Well," she said, "love's a funny thing."

Mr. Still scratched his chin.

"He hasn't shown any other form of—er—I mean, he hasn't been hearing voices at night or acted strangely in any way?"

"What do you mean?" demanded the bridling Mary Ann. "If you mean to suggest that my husband's off his rocker—pardon the vulgarity—daft——"

"I don't mean anything of the sort." The lawyer was balancing a paper in his hand.

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"Here is the deed of gift, Mrs. Tremlow, a fair copy, whereby he transfers half his property and fortune—which, by the way, amounts to very little—to you. Was that your idea?"

"Well, it was and it wasn't." Mrs. Tremlow was on safe ground. "He's a bit near, Mr. What-d'ye-call-it, you understand. A bit difficult to get money out of, so I didn't object when he made over his bit of property to me. Being a lady now"—she coughed—"I've got to live up to my station, if you understand, and he's that absent-minded he would see me walking about the house without anything on and take no notice."

"That is his salvation," said the lawyer earnestly. "I mean his — er — ability to abstract himself from the humdrum, mundane affairs of life and bury himself in science."

Suddenly he rose and clasped his forehead. "You gave him half yours?" he said in a hollow voice. [*Page* 316, *col.* 2.]

He laid his hand on the professor's shoulder.

"Mr. Tremlow," he said, and the professor looked up with a start.

"Hullo, Still!" he said. "When did you come?"

Mrs. Tremlow made a clucking noise with her tongue to express her good-natured tolerance.

"Here are the deeds we settled the other day. This is your wife's, which she had better keep, and this is yours, in which she transfers half her property to you. You quite understand that you have given over to Mrs. Tremlow half your worldly possessions? You will see the schedule attached."

"Yes, yes," said the professor, glancing at the paper and thrusting it into a pigeon-hole. "Good-bye, Still; I hope you have a pleasant voyage."

The lawyer shifted uncomfortably.

"My train doesn't go for an hour," he said.

"I'm sure it doesn't," said the courteous professor, applying himself again to his paper. "Trains never do go for an hour."

Still shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"All right, then, I'll go along," he said, "Good-bye, Mrs. Tremlow."

"Good-bye, love," said the professor.

"Ain't he the most absent-minded man you ever saw in your life?" asked Mary Ann in tones of admiration as she stood upon the front-door step of the house. "He's always telling me to be careful how I cross the road, because it's so dark. He don't know the war's started, let alone over."

Still offered his hand.

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"I think you ought to have a very quiet and peaceful life, Mrs. Tremlow," he said. "I don't think you will have a very luxurious one, because the professor's income is not as large as it was."

"We'll manage," replied Mrs. Tremlow determinedly, meaning thereby that she, at any rate, would manage.

He walked down the flagged path to the garden gate and collided with a young man who was coming in. He was a burly young man in a ready-made suit, and his hair, as the lawyer saw—for in the collision the stranger's hat had been knocked off—was parted symmetrically in the middle, so that one long but well-plastered curl dipped over his forehead, and then, as though repenting its rashness, curled backward to his almost shaven head.

"Whinecherlookwhereyagoin?" said the young man rapidly, and Mr. Still, who understood the language, for his practice had extended even to the lower courts of judicature, replied courteously after his kind.

At the sight of the newcomer Mrs. Tremlow had come rapidly down the three steps from the door.

"Why, Tom?" she said, holding out her hand. "Well, I am glad to see you. How did you leave Mother?"

"She's all right," said Tom in a tone of disgust, as though the matter of his mother's good health were a sore point with him. "I want——" began Tom.

"Come and see my husband, Professor Tremlow," said Mary Ann, shivering with pride. "He's a real gentleman, Tom, though he's a bit over the age limit."

She dragged the reluctant young man into the study, and it happened that the mind of the professor was momentarily disengaged.

"Willie, this is my brother Tom." She introduced the young man with a certain defiance.

"Your—er—brother? Glad to see you. Sit down, will you? Have you any sisters?"

Mrs. Tremlow looked sideways and significantly at her relative.

"Absent-minded," she whispered.

"So you're married?" said Tom, who was a slow thinker, and on whom the news had just dawned.

"Married? Of course I'm married," said Mary Ann with a toss of her head. "I sent you a bit of the wedding cake."

A light broke in upon Tom, whose other name was Dobbs.

"Oh, that's what it was!" he said ungraciously. "But what did you get married to him for? Did you get my telegram?"

"Well, he's better than nothing," said Mary Ann tartly, "and I didn't get your telegram."

Tom looked at the professor, who had resumed his work.

"Don't take any notice of him," said Mrs. Tremlow, lowering her voice. "He don't belong to this world, in a manner of speaking, though from what I've heard from his lawyer to-day——" she shook her head.

"Well," said Tom grudgingly, "I don't think you've done a bad thing. After all, you had to marry a gentleman of position, and I don't know any other gentleman of position who would have married you, with your disposition."

"Don't say anything against the professor, Tom," said Mrs. Tremlow virtuously, "As soon as I was married he handed over half his property to me and I handed over half of mine to him, so you might call it a love match."

"I might and I might not," said the careful Tom.

He was a slow thinker, as has been remarked before, and suddenly he rose and clasped his forehead.

"You gave him half yours?" he said in a hollow tone.

"Yes. What's up?" asked the alarmed Mrs. Tremlow.

"When did you marry?" said Tom in a deep-set voice.

"Last Friday."

"And last Wednesday I sent him a wire" —emotion prevented his continuing for a moment—"asking him," he went on, "to break the news to you that old Uncle Joe in Australia had died and left you £100,000. You was always his favourite, Mary Ann."

Mrs. Tremlow grasped the window for support. The room spun round and round, and then her shaking knees brought her to her husband's side.

"Willie," she said, and her voice was very shrill and squeaky. "He sent you a wire telling you I was worth £100,000!"

The professor looked at her and looked at her brother, then he looked at his boots, and then he looked at the ceiling, and then he scratched his nose.

"Dear, dear," he said in a tone of surprise. "Yes, yes, I remember."

"But you—you didn't tell me," wailed his wife.

"No, I didn't," admitted the professor. "Absent-minded, my love, absent-minded. Take your brother down to the kitchen and give him a good time, Mary Ann. You know the way."

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Heart-of-Gold.

By Hamilton Smith.

Illustrated by John E. Sutcliffe.

BEFORE a strip of looking-glass in one of the chorus dressing-rooms at the Hilarium Theatre Jill sat in a sort of wistful dream decking herself for the sacrifice.

All about her fluttered, chattered, shrilled and giggled a thrice-distilled exoticism of Girl. Lovely, slender goddesses, not one over twenty, ragged and sky-larked in every sort of garment, from the kimono, worn for the mysterious rites of make-up, to undergarments of sheerest silk.

She saw a slight, appealing figure, its slender beauty crowned by masses of fair hair. Her glance dwelt thoughtfully on the pure line of neck and shoulder. She knew herself beautiful and the knowledge for once brought a touch of sadness.

"It's all for men," her thoughts ran in a bitter, disillusioned vein, "and what do they care? Their only idea is possession, and once they've had all they want from a girl they don't care twopence about her. And yet night after night, with the approval of a dear, respectable old world, we come here and fake ourselves up and fool around simply and solely to make men want us. I s'pose we're really an advanced line, put here so that all the mothers and wives away back at a safe distance needn't know anything about what men are really like. We keep the home fires burning at the right temperature, so to speak; otherwise they might flare up occasionally and burn the whole outfit to the ground. We're a kind of moral trouble-squad!"

Shrugging faintly she began to put on the cream serge frock decreed for the chorus in the opening scene at Somewhere Sur-Mer. The door of the dressing-room crashed open, letting in the call-boy's wail of "ten minutes—ten minutes, ladies, please," and a dark, handsome girl, by some miracle completely ready to go on at this early moment, Olga Dent, the keeper of Jill's conscience, her flat-mate, and the proud possessor of a two-line part, sauntered up radiating that delicately-brazen *chic* so peculiar to the Hilarium.

"Well, dear darling?" she began spaciously for the benefit of the world at large, and leant easily against the long, bench-like dressing-table. Then her eyes narrowed wisely.

"Got the blue devils, haven't you, Jill? Cut them out; we can't afford them. They lower one's face value. What's the trouble?"

Jill's soft, provocative mouth curved into a half-smile.

"I'm a butterfly that's hurt its wing against a hard world to-night. Don't take any notice. Anybody that's anybody in front?"

"Nine dukes, five earls, and sixteen baronets, not to mention Guardees," lied Olga cheerfully. She lowered her voice. "And let me tell you something cheerful. Angela West, our fascinating star, has got it in for you. I heard her talking to Silk about you. She called you 'that washed-out little fair-haired stick.' How she must love you! Who's the man you've taken away from her?"

Jill, hooking the corsage of her frock with listless fingers, shook her head.

"I haven't got a man in the world. There's only one who might be interested. He sits in D27 and walks with a stick. He's there night after night and never takes his eyes off me. But he never told his love, as it were. Nothing from him ever comes to the stage door. P'raps I just remind him of his little sister at home. What a dear she must be!"

"That's perfectly easy to find out. Anyhow, watch Angela and 'member I've warned you. She's——"

"Beginners for the first act, *please*," wailed the voice from without. Olga turned away coquettishly.

"Bye-bye, dear. See you later."

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II.

During the interval, in his small, confused room, a cross between a demi-mondaine's boudoir and the den of a rather feminine man, amid a litter of press cuttings, correspondence, signed portraits of stage beauties, and cigarette ends, Oswald Silk sat at his roll-top desk, breathing semi-defiance and Egyptian cigarette smoke at Angela West. Every two seconds he broke off to hurl curses at some interrupter who knocked at the door. Every half minute the telephone bell rang pitilessly. A stage-manager is a busy man; beads of perspiration began to form on Silk's pink forehead.

"Well, anyway have a heart," he burst out at last. "Can't you see I've enough on my hands without your troubles, Angela? Doesn't a job like mine make hell look silly? Run along and count your blessings and your bouquets. See me to-morrow."

Angela sat calmly on a table, swinging her legs negligently, and flicked cigarette-ash on to the carpet.

"You've got to do something about it this minute, Oswald. That fair-haired little Jill-devil's put it over the man with the limp in D27. He happens to be Lord Chalfont, and he's mine, because I want him, and I had him till she came into the show. I can't tell you why he fancies her; she's as ordinary as the pies that mother made. But men are all mad. 'Sides, he's been wounded and had shell-shock. He never takes his eyes off her. You must give Miss Jill Wentworth the straight griffin about him, simply, as you would to a child."

"Must? How can I? Isn't she here to attract men? As long as he wants one of our girls with a great big want do I care who she is? You've lost your nerve, Angela. You're still pretty; you needn't worry. You've been giving him the hard eye and the cold face, or something. Can't you keep your own end up with a chorus girl? Where do I come in?"

"You're the original tin god here. Warn her off, and see she doesn't get any of his love-letters or flowers or anything. Have a word with the stage-door man. You can, you know, if you want to."

Silk shook his head irritably.

"Wrong, wrong—all wrong. That's the way to make her all the keener. I don't believe she knows him, anyway. I've got a pretty good idea what you beautiful devils do in your spare time. She's rather little Miss Mouse—doesn't go around with anybody much. That's her charm; she makes all you glad young women look gladder by contrast."

"Probably why he never takes his eyes off her. He's got a pi. fit on him—the war turned some men like that. He thinks she's good, and he wants to love a dear, good girl. And I'm evidently not good enough for his lordship."

Silk snatched up the receiver, barked viciously at some distant innocent over the wire, and crashed the helpless vulcanite back on its hook.

"Well, that's easy. If she's too good, make her bad. Get her off with George Darell. No girl-pal of his could possibly be mistaken for an angel. Then your saintly acquaintance 'll shudder back to your side, and I shall be able to get on with what I'm paid to do. Now, for heaven's sake, scatter and leave me to it!"

Angela in the next interval sent a message to Jill by her maid, so guileless even from one woman to another that Jill was deceived. She distrusted her own kind as instinctively as any other poor, pretty girl. She knew them to be unscrupulous. They stole men from you even if they did not require them; they gave you half-confidences as a bait for whole ones; they copied your clothes and envied your kisses. But there seemed no need to beware of Angela West, who had everything in the world she wanted, and looked it, leaning back in a silk-brocade chair before a brilliant dressing-table.

"Oh, Miss Wentworth," began Angela, and smiled. "I do want to ask you to dine with me at a friend of mine's flat on Sunday night, if you've nothing better to do. He's simply crazy to meet you. I rather want to do him a good turn, so if you *could* come——?"

She pushed forward a vast, beribboned, hand-painted box invitingly. "These are some of his chocolates. He's got a charming taste in chocolates—and other things. He's rather well in with the management, too. In fact, he's frightfully useful all round."

Jill slid a large liqueur-chocolate between her pink lips and looked thoughtfully at Angela.

"Men never give anything for nothing, do they?" she queried at last. "There's always something behind it all. Sometimes I hate men—they're so deadly selfish. But it's awf'ly kind of you, Miss West, and I'd love to come, thank you."

"Well, you know my flat, in Knightsbridge, looking over the Park. Drift along about seven and I'll take you on. It'll be rather a jolly crowd. Bye-bye!"

Since women dress largely to annoy one another, Jill crawled delicately from her taxi

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outside Angela West's flat sheathed from waist to mid-ankle in a soft, intriguing mist. You do not stay long at the Hilarium unless you know how to wear clothes. The lift attendant shepherded her respectfully, and respect glinted in the eyes of the smart maid who admitted her.

From an adjacent bedroom Jill caught snatches of song, and presently Angela swayed deliciously through the doorway in fifty pounds' worth of inspired naughtiness, openly triumphant and astonishingly pleased with herself.

"Hullo, Jill!" she exclaimed in the clear, metallic tones of the stage, with the stage's insistence on consonants. "Just one wee little Martini before we go. You look topping. Marceline, two cocktails, quickly."

"I love your room," said Jill dreamily. She lay back in a downy-soft armchair and felt the ice-cold, wicked little drink flow like fire through her veins.

"It's a perfect dream of a room, but I know a better—George Darell's drawing-room in Great Portland Street. Come on—the car's waiting. Ours for the high spots and the bright lights!"

George Darell rose to meet them in the softly-lit hall of his wonderful flat. The scented smoke of a wood fire curled mistily up the wide chimney, unsubstantial as the dreams a girl might dream of her future if the monarch of this splendour extended to her his golden sceptre.

As Darell, who knew why she had been brought, let his eyes wander over Jill's fair, slight beauty, there came a momentary catch to his breath and a light in his eye. But he only moved forward with the most perfect charm of manner, holding out a welcoming hand.

"It's really frightfully decent of you both to turn out on a wet Sunday night," he said, and his expression and his voice softened into a genuine sincerity of gratitude.

There were other girls, other men, who seemed to blend into a vague background of lovely frocks set off by the conventional male black and white, but insensibly yet surely Angela drifted away with a clipped-moustached, obvious soldier, leaving Jill and George Darell as isolated as if no other human being moved within a thousand yards.

She found herself sitting in a great armchair before the fire with her little satin feet propped on a brocaded footstool, and Darell stood, tall and almost austere, with his back to the blaze, looking down at her and talking in a lazy, clean-cut voice, with the almost arrogant ease of one who has always had the world at his disposal.

"You're too intelligent for the stage," he said idly from his great height. "It's meant for stupid people who like posing. You think too much, and you couldn't pose if you tried. Why do you do what you hate doing?"

"My dear Mr. Darell, you're extraordinarily ungrateful. How would you kill your dull evenings if you couldn't come down to the theatre to look at us, and guess which would be the most fun to take out?"

"God knows!" admitted Darell, who was clever with women, and admired cleverness in them, laughing back. "The worst of it is you aren't all fun. Some of you are vain, most of you are stupid, nearly all of you are greedy. But you yourself are too wise to be too anything else. This is my lucky evening, and I am *so* glad I've met you. Come and let's dine, and drink to our long and charming friendship. I hope it's going to be long; I know it'll be charming."

It was a gay affair, a revelation to Jill, accustomed only to meals in gilded restaurants. Afterwards he took her, in the manner of a man, to show her his treasures—things he had shot, trophies he had won by skill at games. She found herself alone with him in his own room, smoking delicious Egyptian cigarettes, listening idly to his lazy gossip. There came silence, and she felt him looking at her.

"Jill," he began, with the calm omnipotence of a man who has never denied himself anything. "I want to be friends with you. You're the most delightful thing I've met for years. You wouldn't find me an awful bore. I've never got particularly on any woman's nerves, as far as I can remember. You'd discover I'm quite amusing and a good sort in my way. The only thing is, I'm too old to spend ages and ages creating an atmosphere and working gradually upward from acquaintance to friendship, and so on. I'm putting it quite clearly from the start. You won't mind or be cross, will you? I think you're too clever for that. Only stupid people are cross and put on frills. It isn't done in the best circles."

He stood smiling down, very tall and good-looking, and experienced and confident. Evidently he had the habit of victory. She took the cigarette from between her lips and answered:

"You're quite right, I'm not a fool. I know quite well why I was brought here. But I'm not a humbug either. You've got

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Angela drifted away with a clipped - moustached, obvious soldier, leaving Jill and George Darell as isolated as if no other human being moved within a thousand yards.

[*Page* 319, *col.* 1.]

to see my point of view. Are you going to listen?"

He nodded, still smiling.

"Well," she went on slowly, "I'll be perfectly frank. I've nothing to give you, or sell you, as men look at it. I belong to me, and all the dinners and frocks and cars and this and that won't alter the fact. It depends entirely what you want. I'll be friends with you if you like; I'm not—foolish, wouldn't you call it?—about kisses; I'll be the most accommodating dance partner, dinner guest, supper companion, and all that sort of thing. But if you're out for anything more serious, let me beg you to find someone else. You know as well as I do that it would be

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frightfully useful at the theatre for me to be your friend. But I won't take anything from you—advertisement, meals, and so forth—on false pretences. I may have to earn my living by appealing to men, but I'm not a hypocrite. Can you understand, or don't you want to?"

His quick brain, wise in the ways of women, endeavoured to riddle her attitude and just failed. Very sincere he refused to believe her, for rich men seldom encounter sincerity in women. But her fascination almost thrilled him. As for her reservation, time, tact, and temptation work wonders. It seemed good enough for a start.

"You've met me on my own ground. We've both been frank to the edge of brutality. I think we'll get on. Shall we be friends and risk it?"

Half laughing, half caressing, he took her face between his hands and kissed her. The contact of her soft, appealing mouth thrilled him to an unfamiliar degree, but, being subtle in the ways of love-making, he released her gently and let her go.

III.

Bond Street is very heavenly at half-past three on a summer afternoon. To Jill, sauntering Piccadilly-ward in her coolest, most captivating frock, the sunlight, the shop windows, the splendid, silent cars, the warm, bituminous scent of London in June brought a faint, sick feeling of sheer happiness. Similar emotions seemed to stir the big, bronzed man limping towards her leaning heavily on a stick, for a smile lit up his rather sombre countenance; he paused and raised his hat.

"At last, thank God!" he exclaimed fervently. "Please don't go. I'm not mad, really. I've tried so hard to see you, it would be deliberate cruelty for you to run away. Haven't you ever noticed me at the theatre? I come and watch you nearly every night."

Irresolute, she stood trying to connect something familiar about his steady gaze and limping foot with other circumstances. Then truth dawned on her in a flash.

"You're the man in D 27," she said mechanically. "I remember now. But you mustn't stand here talking. It'll make your—make you——" She glanced helplessly at the crippled foot and flushed with embarrassment. "It's so tiring for you," she ended with an effort.

Their eyes dwelt on one another beseechingly as the eyes of people do who are in perfect sympathy and yet are perfect strangers. They seemed to implore one another mutely to do something before the passing moments tore them apart still unknown to each other. He jerked his head back restlessly and took a desperate risk.

"Do please come and have tea with me. I've so much to tell you. Anywhere you like, but I'd rather it were my own place because—because I'd like to see you there. May I?"

A crawling taxi swerved to his raised hand. In a moment they were gliding side by side towards his rooms in Ryder Street, chance met, unexplained, and utterly happy.

In five minutes Jill found herself amid the solid comfort of a man's rooms, differing utterly from George Darell's. These were simple to the point of austerity. Her unknown host made her welcome, gave her a cigarette, rang for tea, and began to explain himself.

"My name's Chalfont," he said slowly, sitting opposite her in a state of happy dreaminess. "I'm Lord Chalfont really, but I can't help it and it doesn't matter. I got this foot crocked in the war, and it seemed to spoil the whole of life till I saw you at the Hilarium. Now I've begun to buck up again simply in order to get to know you somehow. I've done my best, but you've been rather unkind, for you never answered a single one of my letters. I wouldn't get anyone to introduce me because I thought it seemed like thrusting myself on you. When I met you in Bond Street I couldn't help speaking. Now here we are. Do tell me your name, *please*."

"I'm Jill Wentworth. But I couldn't answer your letters because, honestly, I never had one of them. How did you address them?"

"Described your frock — the one in Act III. They couldn't have misunderstood. Dirty work somewhere. Never mind, I've found you at last. Are you a small piece pleased? Do try to be!"

She smiled at him frankly out of two very sincere blue eyes and nodded. She thought of George Darell with a sinking heart. Here sat a man who would be a friend in the real sense of the word, but people like George Darell do not let go easily.

It seemed such a pity to have met the beautiful romance of Lord Chalfont, stall D 27, a little, so very little too late.

"We're going to be great pals aren't we?" he was saying with a wistful boyishness oddly young for a man in the thirties. "I'm due a shade of happiness after a perfectly horrible war, and God seems to have given you the knack of making me absolutely happy just to look at you. I daresay I appear

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a mad fool, but there it is. Try and put up with it, please, Jill dear. I can't call you Miss Wentworth, can I? Personally I possess half-a-dozen assorted names, but my pals generally call me Hugh. Will you, if you don't mind?"

She nodded, and fell into a little constrained silence.

"What's the matter, Jill?" he said at last. "Have I worried you? Or is there someone—no, there can't be. That would simply crash everything."

"His name's George Darell," she explained slowly; "Angela West introduced him. I don't care for him, but there was nobody else, then, and he promised to be awfully good. I'm afraid he's very exclusive about a girl. You see——"

Chalfont listened. He sat perfectly still. When she ceased speaking he said:

"I'm afraid that ends everything. I'd hoped to be so happy with you because—because you're such a dear. But Darell's another matter. I knew him at school. He's not a man I'd introduce to any woman for whom I had the least regard. Sorry, but you'll understand before you're through with him. But I'm glad we met. You see, I've had such a happy afternoon, and they happen quite seldom."

He stood up awkwardly, and she held out her hand.

A smile lay in her eyes and behind it tears struggled to break through. Life seemed suddenly very miserable, because she liked him so, but she had promised and Darell would not overlook it.

"Please let me send you home in the car," he begged, and she let him since it was all she could do.

Outside her block of flats in Marylepad Street, Ramage, the chauffeur, refused a tip with the greatest tact.

"You'll not be annoyed I know, miss," he explained politely. "You see, mine's not a place of the ordinary kind. Bates—that's the indoor man—and me was with the Major in France, and anything we can do for 'is friends—if you can see what I mean. Thanking you kindly all the same."

Saluting, he swung the limousine deftly away.

As she climbed the stairs the smile faded from Jill's eyes, and at last the tears had it all their own way.

IV.

The moan of the saxophone died away to silence; the soft, sibilant shuffle of dancing feet on the floor of the Consular Club ceased. George Darell led Jill back to his tea-table against the wall of the room, a faint yet obvious cloud marring the smoothness of his brow.

"I hear you're to have a song and some lines written into the show at the Hilarium," he said, playing abstractedly with his teaspoon. "Quite a triumph, what?"

Jill, who knew exactly why these things had occurred, nodded laughingly.

"Yes, thank you so much. Silk's been awfully decent, too, and Angela's perfectly sweet. I'm a lucky girl."

"But I," he objected, "am not altogether a lucky man. I stand on the brink of Paradise. Like Moses on Mount Pisgah, I survey the Promised Land that will never be mine. Why are you so unkind to me, Jill?"

"The Promised Land wasn't in Moses' contract, and there was nothing about it in yours." She smiled at him very adorably, because she did not want him to see how he distressed her. "Remember, I stipulated that there should be nothing serious—only kisses and dinners and dances. Let's stick to our bargain, please, dear."

He shrugged his shoulders disdainfully.

"That was a kind of saving clause on your part in case you didn't care for me. One realised it and gave way accordingly. But we've travelled a long way since then, dear lady. I like you far too well for these narrow limits; no man could endure them indefinitely who loved you as much as I do. Be sensible, even if you don't want to be kind!"

She leant back and looked at him steadily.

"Did you say *love?*" she queried, with an undercurrent of irony in her voice. "My dear George, you're far too wise for love. I do know what I'm talking about; a man has really loved me before now, and he didn't ask what you do either. Love implies unselfishness and, attractive as you are, you couldn't be called unselfish. Why should you be when you needn't? If I were a man I should be thoroughly selfish. As I'm not I play the game as far as I'm prepared to go, but no further. Frankly, I meant what I said on the first evening."

She saw a faint, angry colour darken his face, but he kept his temper admirably.

"Don't let's be in a desperate hurry. Dine with me to-night at the flat and cut the theatre. It'll be all right. Silk knows me, and your new act doesn't begin till next week."

"Very well; I warn you it won't make the slightest difference, but I'll love to dine with you all the same. Will you take me home now? I shan't have very much time to change; it's nearly six already."

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Outside his car waited, as everything in life seemed to await this fortunate, impregnable person. During one second Jill had almost a fellow feeling for the big Daimler. She also, in Darell's eyes, had been waiting, available when he chose to beckon. Darell's lady-in-waiting! How many before her had held that proud position?

He took leave in the hall of her block of flats with his usual careless charm dashed by an unspoken implication that the particular woman he favoured must be extraordinarily lucky.

"I'll call for you in an hour," he told her, adding later, "if I may." She nodded and turned away to climb slowly the six flights of stairs between her and solitude.

By chance she found Olga at home.

"You look a little fed up," diagnosed that astute young lady. "I hope you're dining out, for there's nothing to eat in the flat. I am."

Jill tore off her frock with bitter, relentless haste, let it lie in a heap where it fell, and flung herself on the bed.

"I'm going to have my last dinner with Darell," she announced curtly. "He thinks he doesn't get proper return for his kind attentions. Well, he isn't going to get anything more. I played square; I told him at the start. I gave up that charming Chalfont man because I'd promised Darell, and this is what it comes to."

She got up and began brushing her hair savagely. Olga watched with a curious little smile.

"You played square—with a *man!* Jill, darling, what's come to you? Your brain's giving way!" was her only comment.

The hands of her tiny clock showed twenty minutes to seven. Jill wriggled feverishly into a dinner gown and stooped over satin slippers. There came a shrill vibration of the hall door bell.

"My God!" she murmured distractedly, "that man must jump into his clothes head first. Can you keep him amused for a minute, Olga? I'm nearly ready."

But Olga came back bringing a strange guest dressed in chauffeur's livery. She almost thrust him into the bedroom, and Jill stood staring, powder-puff in hand.

The chauffeur, looking rather as if he expected the feminine odds and ends lying about the room to spring up and bite him, addressed Jill with military directness.

"You'll not remember me, miss. I'm Ramage, Lord Chalfont's chauffeur, and I drove you here several weeks ago. The Major's very ill, miss. It's influenza, and his temperature's high. You'll pardon the liberty, but he keeps calling for you by name. Bates, the indoor man, told me. He asked if I remembered where you lived. You see, miss, we thought, if you'll excuse me, if you'd come and see the Major it might quiet him, so that he'd take a turn for the better. I hope I've not presumed, miss, but Bates and me were with the Major in France, and we couldn't stand by and let him go out without——"

In spite of being nearly forty, with a kindly, humorous cast of countenance, Ramage seemed to be unable to control his voice.

Jill put down the powder-puff, and tears came into her eyes.

"Of course, I'll come at once. Thank you for telling me." She reached mechanically for a cloak.

"I've got the car waiting, miss," said Ramage, and moved towards the hall door. He opened it to admit Darell, who came forward to meet Jill with faintly-smiling politeness. She stood away from him, one hand on the door.

"I can't dine with you, George. I'm sorry, but I've got to go. A friend of mine's very ill and wants me. Please make it another night."

Darell went suddenly quiet, and the smile faded.

"This is frightfully sudden. Is she very bad? Do you think there's anything you can do?"

In the background Ramage seemed to stiffen a little, like a good dog scenting trouble.

"At any rate, I'll go with you. My car's outside," continued Darell.

Jill's eyes met Ramage's riveted on her for a swift second. Then she stepped across the threshold.

"It's not a girl; it's a man," she said slowly in her little clear voice. "And *his* car's waiting, thank you."

"Who is he?" asked Darell, deadly quiet.

"Lord Chalfont. Why?"

Darell went perfectly white. Ramage, who held the door now, was measuring him, quite respectfully, with an experienced eye. All Ramage could think of was the Major, who might die while this fool wasted time.

"I disapprove of your going to Lord Chalfont If you do it ends our friendship," came slowly from Darell. He stared insolently at Ramage. Ramage stared back. He was not insolent; he just stared. Jill's voice cut the silence.

"Damn your friendship!" she said distinctly. "I'm going to him because *he* never asked me for anything. There *are* men like

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that. I don't suppose you ever meet them. They'd take care you didn't!"

She sprang down the stairs. With excessive politeness Ramage closed the door in Darell's face.

He took the limousine through London with a suppressed relentlessness that comes to good drivers in their extremity. And all the while Jill sat with her hands locked in her lap, suffering in sympathy with a man who wanted her as a girl loves to be wanted, hating Darell because he only looked on her as the toy, the kept woman. So she came for the second time to Ryder Street.

In some inscrutable manner she seemed to have been explained beforehand, or perhaps Chalfont, in his restless delirium, had done all the explaining. Bates received her with sympathetic gratitude. He led her at once to the sick-room, and she entered with an un-selfconsciousness that made any explanation unnecessary.

The doctor took one quick look at her, and sighed inaudibly his relief. He could depend on this girl. For the rest, he had been a colonel in the Royal Army Medical Corps, and convention worried him not at all.

The night nurse standing by the bed glanced up swiftly, appeared satisfied, and went on with her business. Four years' war-service had taught her never to be surprised at anything.

The doctor held out a friendly, encouraging hand. He felt Jill's cold as ice in his brief clasp.

"His temperature's a hundred and four point five," he whispered. "He keeps calling for you. The least thing may turn the scale; otherwise we've done all we can. Will you answer him next time he speaks?"

She went silently to the bedside and stood looking down at Chalfont. His face, dark with the flush of a high temperature, seemed very pathetic, lined, and sorrowful. Suddenly his voice broke the silence.

"Jill," he murmured—"Jill, I want you so! Why don't you answer my letters? Won't you come and see me? I'm beastly ill. No; there's that other man. Oh, my God!"

The voice died away to a groan. Jill sat down silently on a chair by the bed-head and took one of his hot, dry hands in hers.

"It's all right, old thing, I'm here," she said gently. "There isn't any other man. I've sent him away."

The words seemed to soothe him, or the touch of her hand, for the strained expression softened. The doctor moved close to her.

"Carry on," he whispered. "It's up to you now. I'm going into the next room, that's all."

At midnight the doctor came in, nodded to Jill, took Chalfont's pulse, and went out. She felt an insane longing to scream. They appeared to treat her, not as a human being, but as a part of the apparatus of healing—greater than a thermometer but less than a binaural stethoscope.

Chalfont moved restlessly and his voice rose in a despairing cry. "Oh, Jill," he said, "why don't you come when I want you so?"

Tears of sheer weariness and heartbreak trickled down her face. She bent over and kissed him tenderly.

"I'm here, my dear, and you don't know me!" she whispered. And then: "Hugh darling, I love you! Go to sleep, there's a dear!"

He sighed, and the restless fit left him. The night nurse took a thermometer, dipped it in antiseptic, wiped it with a piece of sterilised cotton-wool, shook it, and read the scale under the shaded lamp.

In the morning, at the first twitter of birds, Chalfont opened his eyes, looked up, and saw Jill.

"You?" he said feebly. "Jill darling, how do you come to be here? You're Darell's. Or is it this fever, and you're not real?"

Very gently she stroked his damp hair.

"I'm not Darell's. I've broken with him," she murmured. "You must sleep, dear; you're very tired. I promise not to go away."

He smiled up at her, closed his eyes, and slept. The doctor entering half-an-hour later, put his fingers against Chalfont's wrist and patted Jill's shoulder almost affectionately. He helped her out of the room and surveyed her thoughtfully in the corridor.

"To all intents and purposes you've saved that feller's life," he said slowly. "I'm exceedingly grateful. We're very old pals, he and I. I've had a room got ready for you, and you're to have a hot bath and go to bed. They'll bring you breakfast and a sleeping draught, and you're not to get up before tea-time."

"But," she began, "Olga—the theatre—I——"

He caught her as she swayed, utterly used up.

"Bates has telephoned, and a medical certificate will settle the theatre. Do as you're told," he answered, and there seemed no alternative.

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V.

However stern the fight, there comes the inevitable moment when all is achieved, the struggle is over, the bugles sound "Cease fire!" and the tired warrior has leisure to draw breath before the next affray. Some such thought flickered in Jill's brain when, a month later, she poured out tea for Chalfont in his Ryder Street sitting-room, a pale, convalescent Chalfont, clothed and in his right mind, weary still, yet overwhelmed with gratitude.

He leant forward, took one of her slender hands and held it gently between his. She felt the wild, sweet, spiritual electricity flow from him to her, with half-closed eyes let it steal over her for one moment, marking one tiny halting-place, one oasis in life's desert. The strain of that night when he might have died returned to her, and she let this moment be her reward. Far away, so it seemed, she heard him speaking.

"Jill, you've been so good to me. I love you and love you, but I can never love you enough. You're the littlest thing, aren't you? I want so much to take care of you always. Will you please let me? They say I've got to have a sea voyage, but we could be married ever so soon, and let the voyage be our honeymoon. I'm an awful crock, I know, but I want you so, Jill."

She opened her blue eyes, and they were very wide and starry. For this man was not as others, the Darells of this life. In his mouth were the words "love" and "marriage," and they sounded very sweet, even as she put them away from her quickly, because of the unbearable temptation.

"You're a perfect dear to me, Hugh," she said slowly, "but you would be, because you're you. I can't tell you how much I love you for what you've said, the more so as I can't possibly marry you. But I do thank you ever so much. These things mean such a lot to a girl."

His face seemed to go perfectly blank, with all the life and expression swept from it.

"You love me and you won't marry me? I don't understand."

A very tender, adorable smile curved the corners of her mouth.

"My dear, you've been very sweet, but you're not a bit like your own self, and you never have been since first you saw me. In the beginning you were wounded and had shell-shock. Now you've been ill again. For the moment you think I'm everything in the world to you because you're down and out, and you just cling to the one idea of loving me. But before the war, when you were perfectly fit, you wouldn't have thought of marrying a chorus girl, would you?"

His pale face flushed, and she saw it, and nodded almost imperceptibly.

"I don't care——" he began.

"But I do, Hugh. I don't want you not to care if you *do* marry me. That's what would spoil it; you've got to look at it from my point of view. Girls are queer, proud, difficult little devils, aren't they? It's been so lovely to think you've needed me a certain amount, and I was able to help. And now it's over, so here's love and good luck, and I want you to be very, very happy."

He sat perfectly still, staring straight in front of him.

"Just the remains of a man, done in physically, and turned down by the one girl—God! what an existence!" he murmured bitterly.

She got up slowly, drew on one glove, and came and rested one hand on his head.

"You don't think it was easy, do you?" she asked. "You don't think, if I didn't love you so that it hurts that I could bear to leave you like this, just because I know it's good for you? Good-bye, Hugh, darling, and God bless you!"

He stood up, gathered her against his heart, bent back her fair head, and kissed her passionately again and again.

"Will you leave me? Will you? *Will* you?" he said with such desperate earnestness that she quivered and went limp in his arms. "Do you s'pose I'd let you—after all we've done together? Jill, darling, don't be such a dear little fool!"

Her blue eyes found his through a veil of tears.

"I've tried, and tried, and I can't any longer. It's because you kissed me. I couldn't give you up *now*," she whispered.

Late that night, as they brushed their hair together, Jill told Olga.

"He was a perfect dear to me, and I'm frightfully happy, really. I don't know why I'm crying like a little fool!" she ended.

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Why Do You Hate Me?

By

Christine Jope-Slade.

Christine Jope-Slade.

This is one of the articles which, it seemed to me, had to be written. The world to-day is so full of hate and distrust that newspapers serve up little else, in the effort to be popular, because sympathy and loving-kindness have gone out of business. It seemed to me, also, that the article had to be written by a woman, because hate, like charity, begins at home, and the home is woman's kingdom. Suppose we all try to hate one person a little less every day?—[Ed. R. M.]

I GOT the request for this article on a crisp and blue morning. I said: "No one hates anyone *really*." My thoughts registered that smoothly and comfortingly. Then I looked at the morning papers lying on my lap. My thoughts wrinkled and corroded. I realised that the papers represented a careful registration of all the hate, malice, and uncharitableness, international, national, and personal, that is controlling the world. I felt "Good God! this is awful!" in the impotent, foolish way of the suddenly startled and shocked.

War to the Knife.

I saw the slimy devil-spew of hatred on the increep everywhere, in politics, in all industrial questions, in all vital problems, and in domestic life; everybody with one hand at somebody else's throat and the other hand raised in self-defence, and, because of this attitude, grass and weeds growing around everywhere and dry rot setting in.

What's the good of all this hate?

What's the fun of contemplating thirty or forty or fifty years of life spoilt by this rash of little public and private Wars?

What's the fun of going on settling down indefinitely until you finally settle up?

To begin with, we will consume and mentally digest the very actual and virile fact that everybody is living in a state of violent or suppressed hatred for somebody or some body of persons, that this state retards all social and most industrial progress, lowers the standard of communal and individual morality, and makes daily existence a grey and troublous thing.

We are bound to accept this on the superabundant evidence of the daily press, the mental attitude of our employers, our employees, our neighbours, nearly everyone we come in contact with.

Hate is in the Air.

Granted, then, that hate is in the air; how can we replace it with hope and good feeling?

It's your vital business and mine. What are we going to do about it?

Comes the first question that must precede all cures: "What's the Reason for It?"

The paramount reason is envy; the two prime haters are those who have nothing and envy, and those who have much and fear to lose it.

I quote a personal and absolutely true instance of this queer, fungoid mental growth

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that menaces the happiness of life. A young married woman came to work for me. She came once and never again. When I pressed for a reason she said candidly that my nursery made her ill. She went home and cried with rage because my child had a cot and hers a sugar-box.

She hated my cot, therefore, subconsciously, she hated me.

It was not my cot that was wrong or her sugar-box; it was the mental attitude created between us that slammed the door on all mutual understanding, and therefore the amelioration of the sugar-box condition.

Nothing constructive ever came of hate yet. It is purely destructive.

The Reason Strikes Occur.

Apply my cot enemy's mental make-up to the recent strikes, and you get the reason why they were provoked, the reason they took place, and the reason they continue, all in one.

"I believe," said Mr. H. J. Thomas at the Memorial Hall, "that there will be a big fight within the next few months in this country. The fight will take place for a new standpoint, and I hope our foreign comrades will clearly understand what our intentions are."

I can see, I can smell, I can hear that fight; so can thousands of ordinary citizens like myself.

Folks were never so beastly, so avaricious, so discourteous, so malicious towards each other.

Have I acquired that sort of mental outfit?

I think I most certainly have. I think you probably have.

We've got to realise we can't have everything in life, we can't have most things, and that some of us don't get anything.

If we could make swank a punishable offence and inoculate against envy, life would be a very splendid and radiant affair, most stupendously worth living.

We can't, but *I* can, and I try to. Sooner or later everybody has got to try to, or pretend to try to.

Simplify Your Life.

Everybody's got to live simpler, think more simply, be simpler.

If simplicity started in ten houses in a street it would spread to the road, if it got going in two or three roads it would affect a town.

If you want to create an army of followers, commence to do something that everybody secretly yearns to do and nobody has the courage to start.

There is a correct method to settle all problems, and most of our trouble is caused by trying to avoid that method.

We've got to acquire the habit of being decent to the underdog; we've got somehow to get back to the sympathetic understanding that became ours for the short period of the War, when people forgot that dignity and reserve which is really the hall-mark of the rampant snob and egotist, when men spoke to men frankly—yes, and women to men and men to women on the gravestone of Mrs. Grundy, who so miraculously came to life again after Armistice Day.

The world and the men and women in it are not nearly so decent, clear-thinking, and clear-hearted as they were during the War.

Peace seems to have brought almost everything except peace.

Swank Must Go.

We love to exhibit the bonds of servitude in our houses. The cap of the domestic servant rankles festeringly in the new generation from which present-day maids are being recruited, yet there are those among us who would have the kitchen cat in streamers. I like a cap myself. Why? Just to show I've hired the wearer. Swank; that's the real reason—swank and ancient usage.

I see very often battalions of orphans crocodiling in charity garb of such stupendous hideousness that the faces of the poor little beggars look like twin puddings between stiff platters. Those advertisements to the voluntary charity of the good and godly are a very hotbed for this germ of hate. I never see the unimaginative cruelty of it without wincing—and fearing. There is a brain behind every one of those little pudding-faces.

Those who have always expect gratitude. They should give it.

Swank and envy, envy and swank—the father and mother of hatred. We breed them. We cultivate them. We nourish them, you and I as much as anyone else.

You say, "Be decent to those who work for you, try and understand their viewpoint, and see how you get had." I do try, and I don't get had.

If everyone tried, the instinct to "have" folks would die for lack of exercise.

Cultivate a Kindly Spirit.

The poor are always with us—but we needn't make them feel poor all the time.

We've got to be decent to people if the world is to be made decent to live in.

Imagine the purposeful work in the world a family would get through who sat around

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waiting to club each other on the head, snatch each other's job, and render each other physically incapable.

Well, we all belong to one big human family, and that's what we're doing the seven days of the week, including Sundays.

There's just as much cheerful co-operation about us as there is between the bird and the early worm.

We can't cleanse the world of this germ of hate, but we can concentrate our beneficent and sanatising efforts on our own home patch to such an extent that that germ will feel just about as comfortable and settled-down as a bluebottle in an operating theatre.

Hate is not only brutalising, narrowing, and stunting, but it is an awful waste of time—and time is short.

It's up to us to eliminate it as far as possible.

There Must Be Mutual Interest.

The share basis is the only possible basis for successful work. Mutual interests make smooth roads and smooth travelling.

Do you suppose the overalls movement that swept the United States some months ago, as a public protest against the whole standard of prices and a deep-rooted discontent against the cost of living, could have taken place over here with our present rusty-fretsaw class-distinctions and prejudices forever jingling us? Not a bit of it! Do you imagine the equally successful carry-your-own-lunch movement could have been inaugurated over here when Mrs. Jones can hardly bear to be seen taking in her own bread at the front door?

The creation of unions which have their root in hatred of other unions can never create unity in any sense of the word, but the formation of unions against things which menace the health, happiness, well-being of the community would be of incalculable value.

Oiling the Business Machinery.

One wise firm which knows no ructions has inaugurated a system whereby there is a prompt and fitting recognition of unusual service or talent, which improves *moral*, where a "suggestion-box" such as they have in some of the London shops makes for the swift righting of employees' grievances and becomes the home of many valuable ideas.

You probably say fretfully as I have said fretfully, "What a beastly bother it all is!" There's only one real remedy, and that is to bother ourselves.

DEVOTION.

Dear, will you thrill with pride to know
  Still rests your letter near my heart?
For oh! I could not let it go,
  Though weeks have hastened to depart
    Since your hands wrote
  This trivial and unimportant note.

Or will you smile in mirthful scorn
  And blame me for a foolish swain,
Chide me for being thus love-lorn
  And then indulgently explain
    How out-of-date
  Is all the news the letter had to state?

Greatly I doubt it; rather I'm
  Inclined to think you'll sternly frown
To know I've carried all this time
  Your friendly note to Mrs. Brown,
    Which I am most
  Sorry to say I quite forgot to post.

Theta.

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Plain Letters to a Pretty Girl.

From

A Bad Man.

Illustrated by A. K. Macdonald.

In this first letter, which reaches Eve on her fifteenth birthday, the Bad Man points out that she is on the threshold of her career. The next few years will make her or mar her. He sets forth those things which will adorn or destroy Eve. Out of his wickedness he gives her good counsel. She will take not the faintest notice on principle, but some of his words may stick fast.

Eve, darling, I visualise you chubby with steamed puddings and roast mutton, for I believe they Feed Them Very Well at expensive seminaries for the female young.

You have a soul largely obsessed by games, but there are glimmerings nevertheless, for even a British *régime* cannot altogether crush Nature. You are dressed in a blue suit for walking out, your underclothes are intensely plain, and you are happiest in a gym costume.

I should describe you as an almost unawakened creature except when, very rarely, a sunset, or the music in chapel, or the personality of a beloved mistress, or Something, stirs you to a vague restlessness which you are in the habit of allaying with extra food, if you can afford it. (Yes, indeed, the price of chocolates *is* wicked. I agree that it ought to be controlled.)

But, Eve, the days are coming when your chubby face will fine down into a rather charming oval, your extremely candid eyes will hold a hint of interrogation which is the beginning of wisdom. You'll wonder if those fine, large, flat-heeled, sensible shoes are quite the nicest home for two comparatively slender feet, and the redness of your hands in winter may cause you a faint regret.

The Authorities will condemn these æsthetic yearnings, for we like to keep our school-girls bluff and hearty as long as possible, because life is simpler thus, but life is life, and æsthetic yearnings will come. And at the moment it seems to me that the counsel of a man, bad from instinctive and acquired wickedness, may fill a gap between the epigrams of the games-mistress and the mumbo-jumbo of her who runs your House.

The next few years, Eve, old dear, will decide whether you are going to be in the long run something that will turn young men from the vanities of this world to finer,

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nobler things, or an absolute little stinker. On the whole, it is more satisfactory to be that mysterious something. It will pay you better to typify all the romance and beauty in the world to a number of men than represent a species of cheap frivolity not untinged with contempt.

Having worshipped both ideals in my time, you may take my word for it. Moreover, as both seek to attain the same thing in the end, there is absolutely no excuse for the more vulgar outlook. The latter, Eve, is the last resort of those whose ankles have that suave outline peculiar to the elephant's, whose figures recall a bolster, and not too-well-made a bolster at that.

Above all things in the world, you must strive to be natural. This requires courage and character—two qualities most dismally uncommon. To be natural is rare and priceless; to be affected is the extreme outside edge of the limit. You, in fact, are simply You and no one else. It's nothing to write lyrics about and nothing to be ashamed of, either. The idea is a sort of mean between self-respect and side; the best people have it and the others haven't.

You can only achieve it, so far as I know, by being absolutely un-selfconscious, forgetting your appearance, your clothes, your possessions, your relations, and trying to see the best in whatever people surround you.

Beyond everything, Eve, I would like to find you sincere. Young people who feel inexperienced and un-sure of themselves fall sometimes into the delusion of copying their opinions, their ideals, and their manner from others. This is a very sad error. I have never met anyone so far beyond criticism as to afford a safe pattern for the young. It is much better for you to be yourself and make mistakes than to copy someone else and scramble through for the time. You'll have to be yourself some day, if you're ever going to be anything at all, and it's better to start from the beginning.

By this I don't mean that you should become a self-opinionated little bore. You may watch others, notice where they excel, and learn from them, but that's a very different thing from copying. Character and clothes are two things that can't be copied; both must be individual for what they are worth, and in no other way will they be worth anything at all.

There is one danger lurking in your immediate path against which I would like to warn you, and that is the fatal ease with which a quite young girl attracts men of all ages. No doubt, Eve, dear, you're just going to be very adorable, but nine-tenths of your attraction will lie in your youth, not yourself. *You* won't achieve charm for some years; charm is a fruit of infinitely slow growth. It is ripened by the sun of experience, manured (forgive me!) by self-discipline and taking pains. It arises largely from character and personality, neither of which, in your case, is yet formed.

Eve, dear, I know you mapped out your whole future in the greatest detail while you walked round the playing-fields on Sunday afternoons with Mariamne Huddersfield-Kent, and made up your mind you'd always wear black evening frocks and diamonds when you grew up. But the art of living and the art of playing golf have this much in common—there's a technique in both, and neither can be acquired without unwearying practice. Life can be sweated out but not mapped out.

When Albert Beam or some other golf professional goes round in a faultless 72, it looks the easiest, most graceful affair. The hard work that produced the ease never appears. When you see a perfectly charming, unaffected girl adored by everyone in sight for her charm and lack of affectation, you don't realise the pains she has taken to develop her personality. The pains and the personality are there nevertheless.

I know a few fortunate people are born with sunny and captivating temperaments that take them through life in a kind of spiritual Rolls-Royce, but these are the exceptions. It's never safe to assume one is exceptional and let it go at that. Frequently one isn't.

I said it's easy for you to attract admiration from men while you are young, but the proof of your worth is in the quality of the admiration. If you are going to be the right kind of girl, you'll learn far more from men than from women, and nothing that you learn will cause you a moment's distress. Sentimentally — and sentiment will tinge every man's attitude towards you—men are chameleons. They take their colour—their attitude, that is to say—from the personality of the girl in the case. They will be as good as gold if you make them so, and behave distressingly if you give them half a chance.

Since you are very young, I had better tell you that in men there is a quality which has been called chivalry, which I prefer to describe as the protective instinct. Unless you throw it away deliberately, practically every man you meet will manifest this instinct. I daresay I am flying in the face of all that your mother or the elderly women you know ever

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There is one danger lurking in your immediate path . . . and that is the fatal ease with which a quite young girl attracts men of all ages.

told you; but it is the custom of these worthy ladies to err on the safe side. In any case I know much more about men than they do. As long as you are content not to be provocative, not to ask for trouble, men will look after you with great charm and wonderful patience. As a rule, the worse they are really the more care they will take of you.

You see, for the next few years you will exhibit the supreme mystery and romance of youth, and no man worth twopence will take the risk of offending you. There are, I regret to say, certain young women who try to presume on this rather pleasing characteristic in men. The vulgarity of these young women is too lamentable to describe in polite language. Men are not angels, but it is most pitifully stupid for a girl to take chances with such fine instincts as they possess.

Now or in the immediate future, my Eve, your taste is being formed. I want you most particularly to learn to choose the desirable things in life. You will form your taste from the books you read, the people you meet, and the conversations you hear. To put it in a nutshell, only the best is good enough for you.

Possibly when you've acquired reasonable standards of comparison you can afford, if you choose, to read drivel, know trivial people, and talk nonsense. But in the meantime I would rather you picked out the best in everything and stuck to it.

I don't want you to be a prig, or a blue-stocking, or a sanctimonious little beast, but, on the other hand, life is too short and precious to waste on trivialities of any kind. At the moment you possess a certain knowledge of games, and decent instincts. Your experience is *nil* and your judgment on a par with your experience. People scarcely able to distinguish good from bad had better cling faithfully to good until the years bring enough experience to justify taking chances.

Eve, you aren't to be a copy-cat, for imitation is death. You may admire people more attractive or more gifted than yourself, if you like, but whatever you admire in others must be distilled through your own personality. Let me din it into your pretty head that you've got to be You, and nobody else. Character is everything; character can't be bought; it's a commercial asset, the only thing that counts. For good or bad, for ever and ever, you are to be Eve, not bits and pieces of Mary, Jane, Henry, and Mr. and Mrs. Smith. You can't be more than yourself; you may quite easily be much less.

You won't find in the long run that all priceless qualities are monopolised by one grade of society. The best people are born among the washed and unwashed alike. Unless you want to become a snob, a herring-minded, sniffing, self-satisfied little outcast, you'll be on equally good terms with the chauffeur and the Cabinet minister, the fried-fish man and the field-marshal. You

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won't cultivate one manner for the rich and another for the poor, one voice for the drawing-room and another for the scullery. These distinctions of cordiality are not known outside the British Isles, and even here they languish since the Great War.

If I didn't know you possessed it already, I'd like you to acquire a little pleasant vanity, enough to prevent your being satisfied with anything less than the high-watermark of personal appearance. You must always, Eve, dear, insist on being *tiré à quatre épingles*, or poshed up to the *n*-th degree, as they say. The lovely, untidy muckings of the schoolgirl—knots in your shoelaces, a high light on your nose, and stockings that sag at the ankles—must cease forthwith for good.

You are an adorably pretty thing, but you need, and always will need, constant grooming. You owe this to yourself and the world at large. We—the public and myself—have done nothing that we should be affronted by the sight of an untidy, higgledy-piggledy little Eve, tearing about the place like a perambulating picnic.

(This matter of grooming was brought home to me in my early youth by my uncle, one of the best-dressed Ambassadors in Europe, on one occasion when I called on him in his library about some small, personal matter. He listened politely, but his eye wandered coldly over the shortcomings of my appearance.

"The Houndsditch Ratting Society meets at eleven. You had better hurry or you will be late," he observed rather irrelevantly, for I had not mentioned the subject of rats, and I have never forgotten the hint.)

Eve, dear heart, you're going to have a frightfully good time, because you've got the wonderful magic of youth which would bring you back victorious even without your little face and those slender, boyish lines that men will find so distracting. But you'll always play fair, won't you, that others may play fair with you? In spite of what quite old ladies, who in their youth lacked your ineffable appeal, may tell you; in spite of what very young ladies, approximately your own age, and therefore infinitely wise, may say, even men are entitled to the benefit of the doubt until they have proved themselves absolute scoundrels.

You're going one day to be the most acute temptation to all and sundry men—how acute you may not realise for quite a long time—and they will fall in love with you by numbers, very large numbers for choice. Obviously you can't love them all back, but you can be very nice and kind and sympathetic. It isn't an insult on their part; in a way, it's rather a compliment.

I, of course, am only permitted to worship from afar, wherefore I sign myself,

Yours most faithfully.

THE SINNER.

(Next month the Bad Man's wisdom is inspired by the fact of Eve's leaving school.)

If I didn't know you possessed it already, I'd like you to acquire a little pleasant vanity.

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"Situations Vacant."

By Oliver Sandys.

Illustrated by Dolly Tree.

I.

Lord Weybridge wiped a fevered and distracted brow. For three-quarters of an hour by the clock he had been trying to persuade Bébé Fortescue to marry him, but Bébé had steadfastly refused to listen to reason—any reason of his, that is.

"But it's simply preposterous," he exclaimed in desperation. "Only last week we were as good as engaged, and now you simply blight my life by turning me down."

"Only last week," she reminded him, "you were plain Bobbie Marchmont and an absolute ineligible. Perhaps that is why I found you so fasci——not half bad, I mean. I hate gilded pills."

"But I'm not a gilded pill," the mortified lover expostulated.

"Well, what I mean is that nearly every unmarried girl and every match-making mother in the kingdom would swallow you whole now without even looking at you," Bébé went on to explain. "You're an earl. You've £30,000 a year, and the world and all its daughters are at your feet."

"Except you," deplored Weybridge. "Without you I'd just as soon be dead, and I'd far rather not have come into the infernal title. If you liked me before, why can't you love me now?"

"Love," Bébé vouchsafed, "has nothing whatever to do with it. What you're up against now, Bobbie, is my pride, and it's all I've got left. It would simply kill me to know that everyone was saying I'd set my cap at you. It wouldn't be true anyhow, but I couldn't stand it. If only Father hadn't died last month and left me hard up; if only your cousin hadn't fallen down a crevasse and got killed, and if only you hadn't been his next-of-kin we could have had a pauper's wedding and been merry and bright. As it is I'm going to carve out a career. I'm going to support myself."

As though to emphasise her statement she removed Weybridge's arm from her waist, and faced him with a look of great determination that made him long to kiss her more ardently than ever.

"Well, I'd like to hear how you propose doing it," he sighed. "You're not the sort of girl to earn a living. You're too pretty to start with, and secondly, you've not been brought up to it."

"Experience," said Bébé, in the manner of one who quotes, "is not essential. I have already decided on a profession. In fact, I was just going to make a start when you arrived. Now"—she glanced at the clock—"I am afraid I shall be late."

Weybridge kept his seat.

"You always are late, darling kid," he murmured. "Where were you going? Can I drop you anywhere?"

"Oh, do! I'd forgotten you've a Rolls-Royce waiting outside! That'll look awfully well and help me to make a good impression."

Weybridge frowned.

"On whom?" he inquired suspiciously.

"Well, on Colonel Rungles-Price, for a start," Bébé answered sweetly. "I'm canvassing, you see."

Weybridge didn't see, but he looked at her for enlightenment.

"Parliamentary work?" he queried.

"Rather not. The Midnight Sun Insurance Company. I'm going to represent them."

"The deuce you are!" Weybridge stared at her aghast. "But, good Lord," he exclaimed, "it—it surely isn't done. I mean, well—you know what I mean," he floundered.

"Quite." Bébé did not take offence. "But no honest work is beneath anyone's dignity nowadays, Bobbie. It's only servants who turn up their noses at things. Besides, this is big business. Any week I may turn over from £200 to £700 in a single swoop. You see, I'm not going to have a fixed

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salary. A good many insurance companies only engage people to work on commission. That's the basis I'm starting on. All one needs is a—a pleasing appearance and conversational ability. Don't you think I'll do?"

"I'd like to hear some more," said Weybridge guardedly. "How did you get to hear of the job?"

"I read of it in a daily paper, 'Situations Vacant' column. 'A lady canvasser required.' Then I called on the manager of the Midnight Sun, and he said I had every qualification for success. He—he was extremely nice. He wanted to take me out to lunch. . . . No, I didn't go. I kept my appointment with you, silly. Anyway, he engaged me right away. I'm to have 2½ per cent. commission, and if I can persuade wealthy people to insure their lives for about £20,000 each, you can calculate how quickly I shall get on."

"Now it's really time I started to see Colonel Rungles-Price. Is my hat on straight?"

Weybridge groaned.

"But don't you realise it's a ticklish job?" he deplored. "How the deuce will you work it? It makes me feel shivery—the bare idea of tackling absolute strangers in cold blood about their death, don't you know, not to speak of discussing their private affairs in general."

"Oh, well, in a way it's one's duty to point out their responsibilities to them," Bébé asserted. "I've a regular plan of campaign. I shall begin by working special streets. And I shall study the daily papers every day, and then call on the people who have just got engaged or married or who have had babies."

"Good heavens! And suppose you get mixed?" hazarded Weybridge. "Think of the compromising position you might put people in!"

"I'm not going to think of any such nonsense. All one needs, as the manager explained to me, is tact. For instance, if you call on a person and he doesn't happen to be in, you don't give away what your business with him is to a third party, because it's confidential," Bébé explained. "Now it's really time I started to see Colonel Rungles-Price. Is my hat on straight?"

It was not. It was set at a most rakish and altogether captivating angle.

"But why Colonel Rungles-Price?" asked Weybridge in great perplexity.

"His wife has just had a baby—a boy. Their first, too. And he's rich and—well, I've got to start somewhere. 01 Curzon Street, Bobbie. . . . Let me see, where's my card-case? Are you ready? Oh, well, then, just one. . . . You *were* rather a dear when you were plain Bobbie Marchmont. Now we mustn't waste any more time. . . . *Is* my hat on straight?"

II.

Colonel Rungles-Price was not at home. But Bébé's manner and appearance carried all before her. She was shown straight into a charming garden where, beneath a shady tree, a very pretty young matron bent over a delectable baby asleep in its pram. The whole scene reminded Bébé of a photograph setting by a gifted photographer.

Bébé advanced with an outstretched hand.

"I'm so sorry Colonel Rungles-Price is out," she said. "I specially wanted to see

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him. But perhaps I can come again. Is this the baby?" Her interest was genuine. "Oh, may I just peep at him? How perfectly lovely! How lucky you are!"

"Won't you sit down?" inquired the matron. Bébé's appearance disarmed criticism, but at the same time a deep and suddenly-born mistrust of her husband flamed in her breast.

"Did you want to see Colonel Rungles-Price very urgently?" she asked. "I can give him a message."

"That's awfully nice of you. But I really ought to see him alone," confided Bébé. "I've come on a very private matter. He might prefer not to mention it to you until the whole thing is settled."

In his time, before his marriage, Colonel Rungles-Price had earned a well-deserved reputation not only as a warrior, but as a lady-killer. His wife's fertile brain flew to thoughts of blackmail, of breach of promise, of—of anything. This beautiful young woman, she hastily concluded, was obviously a portion of her husband's lightly buried past. But she was too well-bred and far too tactful to be rude. In the last qualification she could have given points to Bébé and won hands down. Tears and tantrums would keep for the Colonel.

For nearly half-an-hour she entertained her visitor, but at the end of that time she was still as far off "placing" her as ever. She didn't seem to be an adventuress. Neither did she look like an actress. She was young and she was lovely . . . and her one admitted object was to see Colonel Rungles-Price alone on a private matter! The card she left in the hall being merely a private visiting-card was hardly more informative.

When Colonel Rungles-Price appeared at luncheon he was greeted by a suspiciously bright-eyed spouse. Many tears had been shed and more loomed in the offing. As soon as they were alone the cloud burst.

"No, it's nothing to do with baby," the matron repudiated. "He's not had convulsions or—or anything. But I'm going home to Mamma. I refuse to live with you any longer. There's no need to ask questions or look puzzled, Hugh. If you'll go into the hall and look at the top visiting-card on the tray you'll understand everything. *Miss Bébé Fortescue has called!*"

Colonel Rungles Price repeated the name with a blank expression.

"And who is she?" he demanded. "What does she want? And how in the name of heaven is her calling here anything to do with your going back to your mother? I've never heard of the woman in my life."

Calling again n the early afternoon, Lord Weybridge found her in tears, in floods of tears.
[*Page* 337, *col.* 1.]

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"She's not a woman," declared his wife; "she's a girl—an extremely pretty girl. She seemed to know you very well. She was madly interested in baby and she said she wanted to see you on a very private matter. Breach of promise, of course. My sympathies are entirely with her. I'm sure she's not an adventuress. You are simply a base, mean deceiver, a breaker of hearts. I have ordered the car for 2.15, and I refuse to discuss the matter any further. We have come to the parting of the ways."

And she wept afresh.

Colonel Rungles-Price was bald, otherwise he might have torn his hair. He stamped into the hall and returned with Bébé's card, holding the innocent bit of pasteboard between finger and thumb as though it had been a noxious insect.

"I assure you, Viola," he declared solemnly "I have never known any girl or woman called Bébé Fortescue—Miss or Mrs. You've found a mare's nest, that's all. There's absolutely nothing in it, I'll swear. It—it's a case of mistaken identity. I'm going straight to see the girl now, and if I can't convince you of my fidelity when I come back you can leave me for ever at the time you've arranged."

He stamped out of the house lunchless, worried and perplexed.

III.

Bébé had just got in when he called. She was tired and not a little disappointed. A whole morning's work had not yielded any apparent success. She seemed to see her hopes of earning a livelihood slipping away. One man, in a business office, had invited her to "have a glass of port across the way"; another had attempted to kiss her; a third had curtly refused to be interviewed at all. Her tongue felt tired and her head ached.

At sight of Colonel Rungles-Price's card her drooping spirits revived. She received him at once.

"How good of you to come and see me," she murmured cordially, smiling at him in a way which, in Weybridge's estimation, would have knocked old Helen of Troy's famous grin into a cocked hat.

"Not good at all, madam; not good at all," exclaimed the soldier apoplectically. "I've called to ask what the deuce you mean by calling at my private house and threatening an action for breach of promise. Why I've never seen you before in my life! My wife——"

Bébé had blanched visibly.

"B—breach of promise?" she faltered. "Whatever makes you think such a dreadful thing? I don't understand."

"Neither do I, madam. All that I know is that you called at my house this morning, interviewed my wife, and led her to assume that such was your dishonourable intention."

Bébé drew her tiny figure very erect.

"You're making a dreadful mistake," she said with great dignity. "I think you must have got sunstroke or—or something. It's quite true I called on your wife. She was ever so nice to me——"

"Well, she hasn't been nice to me since," boiled the irate soldier. "She's in a highly-hysterical, overwrought condition. She says that you know all about me, that you're obviously an intimate acquaintance with financial designs upon me. In consequence, she has refused to live with me any longer. Hang it all, madam, I am fond of my wife. I don't want my home broken up. If you can clear this mystery up and undertake to stop blackmailing me, I may possibly overlook the matter. I'm a man of peace. If not, I shall convey you straight to a police-station."

Bébé stamped her feet.

"You rude man!" she cried. "How dare you speak to me like that? Your wife must be quite as idiotic as you are. I did call to see you this morning on business. I represent the Midnight Sun Insurance Company, and I had hoped to be able to convince you what a very wise thing it would be for you to take out a life insurance policy. That's all.

"But now if you went down on your bended knees I would refuse to do business with you. If your wife won't believe you're speaking the truth, you can ring up the Insurance Company at 5, Bank Buildings, York Street, and ask the manager about me; or if you prefer to ring up Lord Weybridge, my *fiancé*"—she took that fence in her stride—"he will further convince you what a—a howler you have made. Good-morning."

Never in all his life since he had been a subaltern on parade had Colonel Rungles-Price felt so insignificant. Bébé might not be conspicuous for her powers of tact, but she certainly possessed the priceless gift of making a man feel of infinitely less significance than a worm.

At the door he had the grace to pause and murmur a belated and abject apology.

Bébé merely turned a chiffon-clad shoulder upon him.

"You don't deserve a baby at all," was her parting shot. "And it was so perfectly sweet!"

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IV.

Calling again in the early afternoon, Lord Weybridge found her in tears, in floods of tears.

He took her in his arms. This time Bébé did not evince any earnest desire to support herself. She clung to Weybridge instead.

"It's—it's a hopeless swizzle," she sobbed. "And I've got to report progress to the insurance manager at four this afternoon, and I haven't landed a single soul! All I've done is to get myself into a m-mess and be in—insulted."

Bit by bit she told him everything. She even detailed her stormy interview with Colonel Rungles-Price.

"And I referred him to the Company," she concluded, "and if that wasn't good enough, I told him he could apply to you and—and—I believe I even told him we were engaged. I don't exactly remember *what* I said. I was so furious. The man tried to crush me, and if you hold me like that, Bobbie, you'll c-crush me too. Soon I shall be pulp! If I did say we were engaged I didn't mean it, unless, that is—unless you—come to my rescue——".

"Of course I'll come to your rescue!" cried Weybridge valiantly. "I'll do anything you ask. You know you've only got to say what it is."

Bébé sat up. She dried her eyes.

"You are a dear, Bobbie!" she declared, and rubbed a moist cheek against his coat-sleeve. "It's quite a little thing, really. I only want to save my face with the manager of that horrid old Company, so if you'll just insure your life for a nice big sum I shan't mind going to see him. And after that I'll resign, honest Injun. You won't refuse me, will you?"

"Of course I won't, little bean, darling," he agreed. "I'll insure the old earth if you want me to, but . . . You've got to marry me soon"

V.

"Thank Heaven that's over!"

A fugitive grain of rice slid down Lord Weybridge's collar and settled itself in a remote spot, maddeningly out of reach.

He turned to his bride.

"A non-stop run, kid," he said emotionally, "for the rest of our lives. Heaven bless the good old Midnight Sun Company! I don't believe you'd ever have married me if it hadn't been for that affair."

"You certainly saved the situation—and my pride," Bébé assented gratefully. "But that isn't the real reason why I changed my mind. I don't mind telling you now." She twisted the brand new wedding-ring round and round on her finger. Contact with it seemed to afford her satisfaction and courage. "If you want to know," she confided, "we owe to-day to Colonel Rungles-Price's baby."

"Rungles-Price's baby!" echoed the mystified bridegroom. "What on earth have we to do with that kid?"

"Nothing. Only, you see"—she lifted a rosy face and smiled at him provocatively, shyly—"it was such a *duck* of a baby—so utterly sweet and tiny—all frills and lace—that I wanted one like it for myself and—that's all, for the present!"

THISTLEDOWN MAGIC.

Your feet are fairy things, *petite,*
  Your ankles are divine;
Your cobweb hose and silken shoes
  Of gossamer design.
Like thistledown their airy tread,
  And yet when smiles depart,
How cruel and ruthless they can be
  To trample on my heart.

Your hands are exquisite, *petite,*
  Your fingers smooth and fine,
Such little, foolish, snowflake things
  That lose themselves in mine.
Like falling flowers their gentle touch,
  And yet when clouds divide,
How strong their clinging magic is
  To draw me to your side.

Rosemary North.

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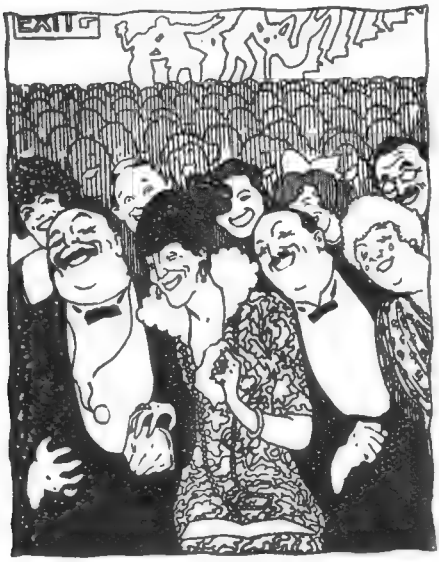
THE TRAGEDY of AUGUSTUS

I.

Augustus Brinsley Muddledrum (the Muddledrums of, M ld)
Was never really understood since he was six months old;
But now the plain, unvarnished truth
Concerning that unhappy youth
Is waiting to be told.

II.

When tops and brigands, knives and guns most juveniles engage,
The young Augustus merely showed a passion for the stage.
He never cared to play at bears,
But had a look of Owen Nares
From quite an early age.



III.

And later, in the village hall, this enterprising lad
Gave snacks from tragic prose and verse—I swear it wasn't bad!
But people hailed the muse with cheers,
And talked about the fun for years.
It made Augustus mad!

IV.

Sophisticated Muddledrums, who up in Town had seen
George Robey in revue, or Charlie Chaplin on the screen,
Called him the greatest wag on earth,
And looked to see his charnel mirth
Turn Alfred Lester green.

V.

Whene'er he stalked the darkened boards and waved his arms about,
A roar of merriment went up, in one continual shout,
Till friends, and relatives and foes
All swayed as one in anguished rows,
And some were carried out.

VI.

He drooped and wilted day by day, until the local quack
Interned him in a nursing home; but even there, alack!
His monologues were so enjoyed
That soon the Matron got annoyed,
And promptly sent him back.

VII.

We all have heard his shocking end; how when his mind was blank
He drove his car—a Ford, I think—over the river bank.
The car caught some projecting bough
(For all I know it hangs there now),
But poor Augustus sank.

* * * * *

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VIII.

One feels that on the Astral Plane, immune from food and drink.
And work and sleep, and politics, there's time, maybe, to think.
Augustus sat and thought for weeks,
Until his modest Astral cheeks
Were quite a wholesome pink.

IX.

He blushed to see his wasted life. In fact he made a vow
To try to put it right at once, it didn't matter how.
He saw the world convulsed; he dreamed
That people held their sides and *screamed*
Who never laughed till now!

X.

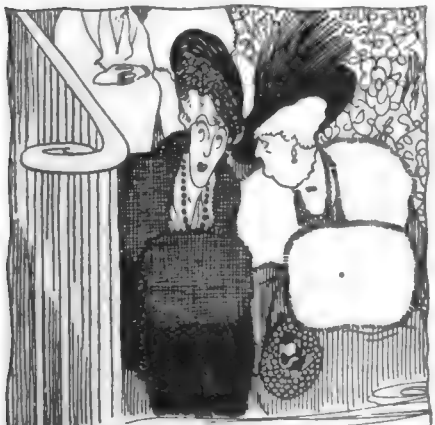
One afternoon, near Westbourne Grove—I should have said
Hyde Park—
He came across an earnest group, all seated in the dark,
And from the quaint remarks that passed
He judged that this should be (at last!)
A chance to make his mark.

XI.

He rapped upon the skirting-board; he juggled with a chair
He held the medium's hand and sang "If you could only care"
He drew upon a shilling slate
That famous sketch of Harry Tate,
Since thought to be Voltaire.

XII.

The medium, badly shaken up, and feeling really ill,
Concealed her agitation, and the story spread, until
The waiting motors, day and night,
Stretched round the corner, out of sight
As far as Campden Hill.



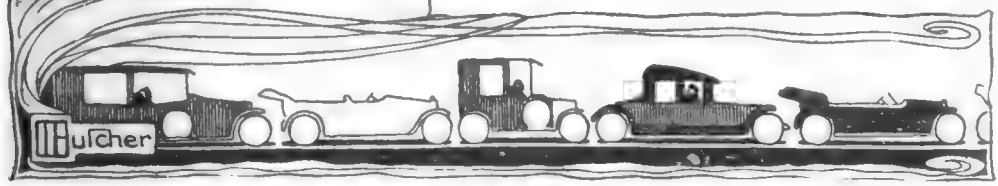
XIII.

The public came for throbs and thrills; the papers came for scares;
Dyspeptic duchesses camped out in twos upon the stairs,
The saints rose up and made a fuss;
Some called Augustus "One of Us,"
But many said their prayers.

XIV.

Why dwell upon this doleful tale? Try as Augustus would
To draw a single honest laugh, it seems he never could.
I gather from the daily Press
He's still in business, more or less—
And still misunderstood.

M. Butcher.



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(Continued from page 273.)

insight. Timothy had resumed his babyhood.

"Does he take any interest in things generally?" he said, also aloud.

"Oh, yes, sir! his food and his Will. It's quite a sight to see him turn it over and over, not to read it, of course; and every now and then he asks the price of Consols, and I write it on the slate for him—very large. Of course I always write the same, what they were when he last took notice, in 1914. We got the doctor to forbid him to read the paper when the War broke out. Oh, he did take on about that at first! But he soon came round, because he knew it tired him, and he's a wonder to conserve energy as he used to call it when my dear mistresses were alive, bless their hearts! How he did go on at them about that; they were always so active, if you remember, Mr. Soames."

"What would happen if I were to go in?" asked Soames. "Would he remember me? I made his Will, you know, after Miss Hester died in 1907."

"Oh, that, sir!" replied Smither doubtfully, "I couldn't take on me to say. I think he might; he really is a wonderful man for his age."

Soames moved into the doorway and, waiting for Timothy to turn, said in a loud voice, "Uncle Timothy!"

Timothy trailed back half-way and halted.

"Eh?" he said.

"Soames," cried Soames at the top of his voice, holding out his hand. "Soames Forsyte!"

"No," said Timothy, and stumping his stick loudly on the floor he continued his walk.

"It doesn't seem to work," said Soames.

"No, sir," replied Smither, rather crestfallen; "you see he hasn't finished his walk. It always was one thing at a time with him. I expect he'll ask me this afternoon if you came about the gas, and a pretty job I shall have to make him understand."

"Do you think he ought to have a man about him?"

Smither held up her hands. "A man! Oh, no! Cook and me can manage perfectly. A strange man about would send him crazy in no time. And my mistresses wouldn't like the idea of a man in the house. Besides, we're so proud of him."

"I suppose the doctor comes?"

"Every morning. He makes special terms for such a quantity, and Mr. Timothy's so used he doesn't take a bit of notice except to put out his tongue."

"Well," said Soames, turning away, "it's rather sad and painful to me."

"Oh, sir!" returned Smither anxiously, "you mustn't think that. Now that he can't worry about things he quite enjoys his life, really he does. As I say to Cook, Mr. Timothy is more of a man than he ever was. You see, when he's not walkin' or takin' his bath, he's eatin', and when he's not eatin' he's sleepin', and there it is. There isn't an ache or a care about him anywhere."

"Well," said Soames, "there's something in that. I'll go down. By the way, let me see his Will."

"I should have to take my time about that, sir; he keeps it under his pillow, and he'd see me, while he's active."

"I only want to know if it's the one I made," said Soames; "you take a look at its date, some time, and let me know."

"Yes, sir; but I'm sure it's the same, because me and Cook witnessed, you remember, and there's our names on it still, and we've only done it once."

"Quite," said Soames. He did remember. Smither and Cook had been proper witnesses, having been left nothing in the Will that they might have no interest in Timothy's death. It had been—he fully admitted—an almost improper precaution, but Timothy had wished it, and, after all, Aunt Hester had provided for them amply.

"Very well," he said; "good-bye, Smither. Look after him, and if he should say anything at any time, put it down, and let me know."

"Oh! yes, Mr. Soames; I'll be sure to do that. It's been such a pleasant change to see you. Cook will be quite excited when I tell her."

Soames shook her hand and went downstairs. He stood for fully two minutes by the hat-stand whereon he had hung his hat so many times. "So it all passes," he was thinking; "passes and begins again. Poor old chap!" And he listened, if perchance the sound of Timothy trailing his hobby-horse might come down the well of the stairs; or some ghost of an old face show over the banisters, and an old voice say: "Why, it's dear Soames, and we were only saying that we hadn't seen him for a week!"

Nothing, nothing! Just the scent of camphor, and dust-motes in a sunbeam through the fanlight over the door. The little old house! A mausoleum! And, turning on his heel, he went out, and caught his train.

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V.

THE NATIVE HEATH.

"His foot's upon his native heath,
His name's—Val Dartie."

With some such feeling did Val Dartie, in the fortieth year of his age, set out that same Thursday morning very early from the old manor house he had taken between Steyning and Amberley, on the north side of the Sussex Downs. His destination was Newmarket, and he had not been there since the autumn of 1899, when he stole over from Oxford for the Cambridgeshire. He paused at the door to give his wife a kiss, and put a flask of port into his pocket.

"Don't overtire your leg, Val, and don't bet too much."

With the pressure of her chest against his own, and her eyes looking into his, Val felt both leg and pocket safe. He should be moderate; Holly was always right—she had a natural aptitude. It did not seem so remarkable to him, perhaps, as it might to others, that—half Dartie as he was—he should have been perfectly faithful to his young first cousin for the twenty years, ever since he married her romantically out in the Boer War; and faithful without any feeling of sacrifice or boredom—she was so quick, so slyly always a little in front of his mood.

Being first cousins they had decided, or rather Holly had, to have no children; and, though a little sallower, she had kept her looks, her slimness, and the colour of her dark hair. Val particularly admired the life of her own she carried on, besides so perfectly satisfying himself and riding better every year. She kept up her music, she read an awful lot—novels, poetry, all sorts of stuff. Out on their farm in Cape Colony she had looked after all the "nigger" babies and women in a miraculous manner. She was, in fact—clever; yet made no fuss about it, and had no "side." Though not remarkable for humility, Val had come to have the feeling that she was his superior, and he did not grudge it—a great tribute. It might be noted that he never looked at Holly without her knowing of it, but that she looked at him sometimes unawares.

He had kissed her in the porch because he shouldn't be doing it on the platform, but she was going to the station with him, to drive the car back. Though tanned and wrinkled by Colonial weather and the wiles inseparable from horses, and handicapped by the leg which, weakened in the Boer war, had probably saved his life in the war just passed, Val was much as he had been in the days of his courtship; his smile as wide and charming, his eyelashes, if anything, thicker and darker, his eyes screwed up under them, as bright a grey, his freckles rather deeper, his hair a little grizzled at the sides. He gave the impression of one who has lived actively *with horses* in a sunny climate.

Twisting the car sharp round at the gate, he said:

"When's young Jon coming?"

"To-day."

"Is there anything you want for him? I could bring it down on Saturday."

"No; but you might come by the same train as Fleur—one-forty."

Val gave the Ford full rein; he still drove like a man in a new country on bad roads, who refuses to compromise and expects heaven at every hole.

"That's a young woman who knows her way about," he said. "I say, has it struck you?"

"Yes," said Holly.

"Uncle Soames and your Dad—bit awkward, isn't it?"

"She won't know and he won't know, and nothing must be said, of course. It's only for five days, Val."

"Stable secret! Righ'o!" If Holly thought it safe, of course it was. She slid her big grey eyes round at him and said: "Did you notice how beautifully Fleur asked herself?"

"No!"

"She did. What do you think of her, Val?"

"Pretty enough and clever, but she might run out at any corner if she got her monkey up, I should say."

"I'm wondering," said Holly dreamily, "whether she's the modern young woman or not. One feels at sea coming home into all this."

"You? Oh, no! You get the hang of things so quick."

Holly slid her hand into his coat-pocket.

"That's the beauty of you," went on Val, encouraged; "you keep one in the know. What do you think of that Belgian fellow, Profond?"

"Rather 'a good devil.'"

Val grinned, not recognising a translation.

"He seems to me a queer fish," he said, "for a friend of our family. In fact, our family is in pretty queer waters altogether, with Uncle Soames marrying a Frenchwoman and your Dad marrying Soames' old wife. Our grandfathers would have had fits!"

"So would anybody's," said Holly.

Val was silent. "This car," he said

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suddenly, "wants rousing; she doesn't get her hind legs under her uphill. I shall have to give her her head on the slope, if I'm to catch that train."

There was that about horses which had prevented him from ever really sympathising with a car, and the behaviour of the Ford under his guidance compared with its behaviour under that of Holly was always noticeable. He caught the train, however.

"Take care going home; she'll throw you down if she can. Good-bye, darling."

"Good-bye," called Holly, and kissed her hand.

Once in the train, after a quarter-of-an-hour's indecision between thoughts of Holly, his morning paper, the look of the bright day, and his dim memory of Newmarket, Val plunged into the recesses of a small, square book, all names, pedigrees, tap-roots, and notes about the make and shape of horses.

The Forsyte in him was bent on the acquisition of a certain strain of blood, and he was subduing resolutely as yet the Dartie hankering for a flutter. On getting back to England, after the profitable sale of his South African farm and stud, and observing that the sun seldom shone, Val had said to himself, "I've absolutely got to have an interest in life, or this country will give me the blues. Hunting's not enough; I'll breed and I'll train."

With just that extra pinch of shrewdness and decision imparted by long residence in a new country, Val had seen the weak point of modern breeding. They were all hypnotised by fashion and high price. He should buy for looks, and let names go hang! And here he was already hypnotised by the prestige of a certain strain of blood! Half-consciously he thought: "There's something in this damned climate which makes one go round in a ring. Still, I must have a strain of Mayfly blood."

In this mood he reached the Mecca of his hopes. It was one of those quiet meetings favourable to such as wish to look into horses rather than into the mouths of bookmakers, and Val clung to the paddock. His twenty years of Colonial life, divesting him of the dandyism in which he had been bred, had left him the essential neatness of the horseman and given him a queer and rather blighting eye over what he called "the silly haw-haw" of Englishmen, the "flapping cockatoory" of Englishwomen—Holly had none of that, and Holly was his model.

Observant, quick, resourceful, Val went straight to the heart of a transaction, a horse, a drink; and he was on his way to the heart of a Mayfly filly when a thick, slow voice said at his elbow:

"Mr. Val Dartie? How's Mrs. Val Dartie? She's well, I hope." And he saw beside him the Belgian he had met at his sister Imogen's.

"Prosper Profond—I met you at lunch," said the slow voice.

"Yes. How are you?" murmured Val.

"I'm very well," replied Monsieur Profond, smiling with a certain inimitable slowness. "A good devil" Holly had called him. Certainly, he looked a little like a devil, with his dark, clipped, pointed beard; a sleepy one though, and good-humoured, with fine, eyes, unexpectedly intelligent.

"Here's a gentleman wants to know you—cousin of yours—Mr. George Forsyde."

Val saw a large form and a face clean-shaven, bull-like, a little lowering, with sardonic humour bubbling behind a full grey eye; he remembered it dimly from old days when he would dine with his father at the Iseeum Club.

"How are you?" said George. "I used to go racing with your father. How's the stud? Like to buy one of my screws?"

Val grinned with a sudden feeling that the bottom had fallen out of breeding. Europe! They believed in nothing over here, not even in horses. George Forsyte, Prosper Profond! The devil himself was not more disillusioned than those two.

"Didn't know you were a racing man," he said to Monsieur Profond.

"I'm nod. I don' care for it. I'm a yachding man. I don' care for yachdin' either, but I like to see my friends. I've got some lunch, Mr. Val Dartie, just a small lunch, if you'd like to 'ave some; nod much—just a small one—in my car."

"Thanks," said Val; "very good of you. I'll come along in about a quarter-of-an-hour."

"Over there. Mr. Forsyde's comin'," and Monsieur Profond "poinded" with a yellow-gloved finger; "small car, with a small lunch." He moved on, groomed, sleepy and remote, George Forsyte following, neat, huge, and with his jesting air.

Val remained gazing at the Mayfly filly. George Forsyte of course was an old chap, but this Profond might be about his own age; and Val felt extremely young, as if the Mayfly filly were a toy at which those two had laughed. The animal had lost reality.

"That 'small' mare"—he seemed to hear the voice of Monsieur Profond—"what do you see in her?—we must all die!"

And George Forsyte, crony of his father, racing still! The Mayfly strain—was it any

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better than any other? He might just as well have a flutter with his money instead.

"No, by gum!" he thought suddenly, "if it's no good breeding horses it's no good doing anything. What did I come for? I'll buy her."

He stood back and watched the ebb of the paddock visitors towards the Stand. Natty old chips, shrewd, portly fellows, Jews, trainers looking as if they had never been guilty of seeing a horse in their lives; tall, flapping, languid women or brisk, loud-voiced women; young men with an air as if trying to take it seriously—two or three of them with only one arm!

"Life over here's a game!" thought Val. "Muffin bell rings, horses run, money changes hands; ring again, run again, money changes back."

But, alarmed at his own philosophy, he went to the paddock gate to watch the Mayfly filly canter down. She moved well, and he made his way over to the "small" car. The "small" lunch was the sort a man dreams of but seldom gets, and when it was concluded Monsieur Profond walked back with him to the paddock.

"Your wife's a nice woman," he said surprisingly.

"Nicest woman I know," returned Val drily.

"Yes," said Monsieur Profond, "she has a nice face. I admire nice women."

Val looked at him suspiciously, but something kindly and direct in the heavy diabolism of his companion disarmed him for the moment.

"Any time you like to come on my yacht I'll give her a small cruise."

"Thanks," said Val, in arms again. "She hates the sea."

"So do I," said Monsieur Profond.

"Then why do you yacht?"

The Belgian's eyes smiled. "Oh, I don' know. I've done everything; it's the last thing I'm doin'."

"It must be d——d expensive. I should want more reason than that."

Monsieur Prosper Profond raised his eyebrows, and puffed out a heavy lower lip.

"I'm an easy-goin' man," he said.

"Were you in the War?" asked Val.

"Ye——es. I've done that too. I was gassed; it was a small bit unpleasand." He smiled with the deep and sleepy air of prosperity which went so well with his name of Prosper Profond. Whether his saying "small" when he ought to have said "little" was genuine mistake or affectation, Val could not decide; the fellow was evidently capable of anything. Among the ring of buyers round the Mayfly filly, who had won her race, Monsieur Profond said:

"You goin' to bid?"

Val nodded. With this sleepy Satan at his elbow, he felt in need of faith. Though placed above the ultimate blows of Providence by the forethought of a grandfather who had t ed him up a thousand a year to which was added the thousand a year tied up for Holly by *her* grandfather, Val was not flush of capital that he could touch, having spent most of what he had realised from his South African farm on his establishment in Sussex. And very soon he was thinking: "Damn it! she's going beyond me!" His limit—six hundred—was exceeded, and he dropped out of the bidding. The Mayfly filly passed under the hammer at seven hundred and fifty guineas. He was turning away vexed when the slow voice of Monsieur Profond said in his ear:

"Well, I've boughd that small filly, but I don'd wand her; you dake her and give her to your wife."

Val looked at the fellow with renewed suspicion, but the good humour in his eyes was such that he really could not take offence.

"I made a small lot of money in the War," began Monsieur Profond in answer to that look. "I 'ad armament shares. I like to give it away. I'm always makin' money. I wand very small lot myself. I like my friends to 'ave it."

"I'll buy her of you at the price you gave," said Val with sudden resolution.

"Why?" said Monsieur Profond. "You dake her. I don'd want her."

"Hang it all!" said Val. "One doesn't ——"

"Why nod?" smiled Monsieur Profond. "I'm a friend of your family."

"Seven hundred and fifty guineas is not a box of cigars," said Val impatiently.

"All right; you keep her for me till I wand her, and do whad you like with her."

"So long as she's yours," said Val, "I don't mind that."

"Thad's all right," murmured Monsieur Profond, and moved away.

Val watched; he might be "a good devil," but then again he might not. He saw him rejoin George Forsyte, and thereafter saw him no more.

He spent those nights after racing at his mother's house in Green Street, Mayfair.

Winifred Dartie at sixty-two was marvellously preserved, considering the three-and-thirty years during which she had put up with Montague Dartie, till almost happily released by a French staircase. It was to her a

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vehement satisfaction to have her favourite son back from South Africa after all this time, to feel him so little changed, and to have taken a fancy to his wife. Winifred, who in the late seventies before her marriage had been in the vanguard of freedom, pleasure, and fashion, confessed her youth outclassed by the donzellas of the day. They seemed, for instance, to regard marriage as an incident, and Winifred sometimes regretted that she had not done the same; a second, third, fourth incident might have secured her a partner of less dazzling inebriety; though, after all, he had left her Val, Imogen, Maud, Benedict (almost a colonel and unharmed by the War)—none of whom had been divorced as yet.

The steadiness of her children often amazed one who remembered their father; but, as she was fond of believing, they were really all Forsytes, favouring herself, except perhaps Imogen. Her brother's "little girl." Fleur, frankly puzzled Winifred. The child was as restless as any of these modern young women —"She's a small flame in a draught," Prosper Profond had said one day after dinner—but she did not flop, or talk at the top of her voice. The steady Forsyteism in Winifred's own character instinctively resented the feeling in the air, the modern girl's habits, and her motto: "All's much of a muchness! Spend, to-morrow we shall be poor!" She found it a saving grace in Fleur that, having set her heart on a thing, she had no change of heart until she got it, though what happened after, Fleur was, of course, too young to have made evident. The child was a "very pretty little thing," too, and quite a credit to take about, with her mother's French taste and a gift for wearing clothes; everybody turned to look at Fleur—great consideration to Winifred, a lover of the style and distinction which had so cruelly deceived her in the case of Montague Dartie.

In discussing her with Val, at breakfast on the Saturday morning, Winifred dwelt on the family skeleton.

"That little affair of your father-in-law and your Aunt Irene, Val—it's as old as the hills, of course, Fleur need know nothing about it —making a fuss. Your Uncle Soames is very particular about that. So you'll be careful?"

"Yes. But it's dashed awkward. Holly's young half-brother's coming to live with us while he learns farming. In fact, he's there already."

"Oh!" said Winifred. "That is a gaff! What is he like, Val?"

"Don't know. Only saw him once at Robin Hill, when we were home in 1909! He was naked and painted blue and yellow in stripes—a jolly little chap."

Winifred thought that "rather nice," and added comfortably: "Well, Holly's a sensible little thing, she'll know how to deal with it. I shan't tell your Uncle. It'll only bother him. It's a great comfort to have you back, my dear boy, now that I'm getting on."

"Getting on! You're as young as ever. That chap Profond, Mother, is he all right?"

"Prosper Profond! Oh! he's the most amusing man I know."

Val grunted, and recounted the story of the Mayfly filly.

"That's *so* like him," said Winifred. "He does all sorts of things."

"Well," muttered Val shrewdly, "our family haven't been too lucky with that kind of cattle; they're too light-hearted for us."

It was true, and Winifred's blue study lasted a full minute before she answered:

"Oh! well, he's a foreigner, Val; one must make allowances."

"All right," said Val, "I'll use his filly and make it up to him somehow."

And soon after he gave her his blessing, received a kiss, and left her for his bookmaker's, the Iseeum Club, and Victoria Station.

VI.

JON.

Mrs. Val Dartie, after twenty years of South Africa, had fallen deeply in love, fortunately with something of her own, for the object of her passion was the prospect in front of her windows, the cool, clear light on the green Downs. It was England again, at last! England more beautiful than she had dreamt. Chance had in fact guided the Val Darties to a spot where the South Downs had real charm when the sun shone. Holly had enough of her father's eye to apprehend the rare quality of their outlines and chalky radiance; to go up there by the ravine-like lane and wander along towards Chanctonbury or Amberley, was still a delight which she hardly attempted to share with Val, whose admiration of Nature was confused by a Forsyte's instinct for getting something out of it, such as the condition of the turf for his horses' exercise.

Driving the Ford home with a certain humouring smoothness, she promised herself that the first use she would make of Jon would be to take him up there, and show him "the view" under this May-day sky.

She was looking forward to her young half-brother with a motherliness not required

["*TO LET*" *continued overleaf.*]

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elsewhere. A three-day visit to Robin Hill, soon after their arrival home, had yielded no sight of him—he was still at school—so that her recollection, like Val's, was of a little sunny-haired boy striped blue and yellow, down by the pond.

Those three days at Robin Hill had been exciting, sad, embarrassing. Memories of her dead brother, memories of Val's courtship; the ageing of her father, not seen for twenty years, something funereal in his ironic gentleness which did not escape one who had much subtle instinct; above all, the presence of her stepmother, whom she could still vaguely remember as the "lady in grey" of days when she was little and grandfather alive, and Mademoiselle Beauce so cross because this intruder gave her music lessons—all these confused and tantalised a spirit which had longed to find Robin Hill untroubled. But Holly was adept at keeping things to herself, and all had seemed to go quite well.

Her father had kissed her when she left him with lips which she was sure had trembled.

"Well, my dear," he said, "the War hasn't changed Robin Hill, anyway. If you could have brought Jolly back with you! I say, can you stand this spiritualistic racket? When the oak tree dies, it dies, I'm afraid."

From the warmth of her embrace he probably divined that he had let the cat out of the bag, for he rode off at once on irony.

"Spiritualism — queer word, when the more they manifest the more they prove that they've got hold of matter."

"How?" said Holly.

"Why! Look at their photographs of auric presences. You must have something material for light and shade to fall on before you can take a photograph. No, it'll end in our calling all matter spirit, or all spirit matter—I don't know which."

"But don't you believe in survival, Dad?"

Jolyon had looked at her, and the sad whimsicality of his face impressed her deeply.

"Well, my dear, I should like to get something out of death. I've been looking into it a bit. But for the life of me I can't find anything that telepathy, subconsciousness, and emanation from the storehouse of this world can't account for just as well. Wish I could! Wishes father thoughts but they don't breed evidence."

Holly had pressed her lips again to his forehead with the feeling that it confirmed his theory that all matter was becoming spirit—it felt somehow so insubstantial.

But the most poignant memory of that little visit had been watching, unobserved, her stepmother reading to herself a letter from Jon. It was—she decided—the prettiest sight she had ever seen. Irene, lost as it were in the letter of her boy, stood at a window where the light fell on her face and her fine grey hair; her lips were moving, smiling, her dark eyes laughing, dancing, and the hand which did not hold the letter was pressed against her breast. Holly withdrew as from a vision of perfect love, convinced that Jon must be nice.

When she saw him coming out of the station with a kit-bag in either hand, she was confirmed in her predisposition. He was a little like Jolly, that long-lost idol of her childhood, but eager-looking and less formal, with deeper eyes and brighter coloured hair, for he wore no hat; altogether a very interesting "little" brother!

His tentative politeness charmed one who was accustomed to assurance in the youthful manner; he was disturbed because she was to drive him home, instead of his driving her. Shouldn't he have a shot? They hadn't a car at Robin Hill since the War, of course, and he had only driven once, and landed up a bank, so she oughtn't to mind his trying. His laugh, soft and infectious, was very attractive, though that word, she had heard, was now quite old-fashioned. When they reached the house he pulled out a crumpled letter which she read while he was washing—a quite short letter, which must have cost her father many a pang to write.

"My dear,

"You and Val will not forget, I trust, that Jon knows nothing of family history. His mother and I think he is too young at present. The boy is very dear, and the apple of her eye. *Verbum sapientibus.*

"Your loving father,

"J. F."

That was all; but it renewed in Holly an uneasy regret that Fleur was coming.

After tea she fulfilled that promise to herself and took Jon up the hill. They had a long talk, sitting above an old chalk-pit grown over with brambles and goose-penny. Milk-wort and liver-wort starred the green slope, the larks sang, and thrushes in the brake, and now and then a gull flighting inland would wheel very white against the paling sky, where the moon was at its bravest—a white bow stretched in heaven. Delicious, vague fragrance came to them, as if little, invisible creatures were running and treading scent out of the blades of grass.

Jon, who had fallen silent, said rather suddenly:

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"I say, this is wonderful! There's no fat on it at all. Gull's flight and sheep-bells——"

"Gull's flight and sheep-bells—— You're a poet, my dear!" said Holly.

Jon sighed.

"Oh, Golly!" he said. "No go!"

"Try! I used to at your age."

"Did you? Mother says 'try,' too, but I'm so rotten. Have you any of yours for me to see?"

"My dear," Holly murmured, "I've been married nineteen years. I only wrote verses when I wanted to be."

"Oh!" said Jon, and turned over on to his face. The one cheek she could see was a charming colour. Was Jon "touched in the wind," then, as Val would have called it? Already? But, if so, all the better; he would take no notice of young Fleur. Besides, on Monday he would begin his farming. And she smiled.

Was it Burns who followed the plough, or only Piers Plowman? Nearly every young man and most young women seemed to be poets nowadays, from the number of their books she had read out in South Africa, importing them from Hatchus and Bumphards, and quite good—oh, quite; much better than she had been herself! But, then, poetry had only really come in since her day—with motor-cars.

Another long talk after dinner over a wood fire in the low hall, and there seemed little left to know about Jon except anything of real importance. Holly parted from him at his bedroom door, having seen twice over that he had everything, with the conviction that she would love him and Val would like him.

He was eager, but did not gush; he was a splendid listener, sympathetic, reticent about himself. He evidently loved their father and adored his mother. He liked riding, rowing, and fencing better than games. He saved moths from candles, and couldn't bear spiders, but put them out of doors in screws of paper sooner than kill them. In a word, he was amiable. She went to sleep, thinking that he would suffer horribly if anybody hurt him. But who would hurt him?

Jon, on the other hand, sat awake at his window with a bit of paper and a pencil, writing his first "real poem" by the light of a candle because there was not enough moon to see by, only enough to make the night seem fluttery and as if engraved on silver. Just the night for Fleur to walk and turn her eyes and lead on—over the hills and far away.

And Jon, deeply furrowed in his ingenious brow, made marks on the paper and rubbed them out and wrote them in again, and did all that was necessary for the completion of a work of art; and he had a feeling such as the winds of Spring must have, trying their first songs among the coming blossom.

Jon was one of those boys—not many—in whom a home-trained love of beauty had survived school-life. He had had to keep it to himself, of course, so that not even the drawing-master knew of it, but it was there, fastidious and clear within him. And his poem seemed to him as lame and stilted as the night was winged. But all the same he kept it. It was a "beast," but better than nothing as an expression of the inexpressible. And he thought with a sort of discomfiture: "I shan't be able to show it to Mother." He slept terribly well, when he did sleep, overwhelmed by novelty.

VII.

FLEUR.

To avoid the awkwardness of questions which could not be answered, all that had been told Jon was:

"There's a girl coming down with Val for the week-end."

For the same reason, all that had been told Fleur was: "We've got a youngster staying with us."

The two yearlings, as Val called them in his thoughts, met therefore in a manner which for unpreparedness left nothing to be desired. They were thus introduced by Holly:

"This is Jon, my little brother; Fleur's a cousin of ours, Jon."

Jon, who was coming in through a French window out of strong sunlight, was so confounded by the providential nature of this miracle, that he had time to hear Fleur say calmly:

"Oh, how do you do?" as if he had never seen her, and to understand dimly from the quickest imaginable little movement of her head that he never *had* seen her. He bowed therefore over her hand in an intoxicated manner, and became more silent than the grave. He knew better than to speak. Once in his early life, surprised reading by a night-light, he had said fatuously: "I was just turning over the leaves, Mum," and his mother had replied: "Jon, never tell stories, because of your face—nobody will ever believe them."

The saying had permanently undermined the confidence necessary to the success of spoken untruth. He listened therefore to Fleur's swift and rapt allusions to the jolliness of everything, plied her with scones and jam,

["TO LET" continued overleaf.]

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and got away as soon as might be. They say that in delirium tremens you see a fixed object, preferably dark, which suddenly changes shape and position. Jon saw the fixed object; it had dark eyes and passably dark hair, and changed its position, but never its shape.

The knowledge that between him and that object there was already a secret understanding (however impossible to understand), thrilled him so that he waited feverishly, and began to copy out his poem—which of course he would never dare to show her—till the sound of horses' hoofs roused him, and, leaning from his window, he saw her riding forth with Val. It was clear that she wasted no time; but the sight filled him with grief. He wasted his. If he had not bolted, in his fearful ecstasy, he might have been asked to go too. And from his window he sat and watched them disappear, appear again in the chine of the road, vanish, and emerge once more for a minute clear on the outline of the Down. "Silly brute!" he thought; "I always miss my chances."

Why couldn't he be self-confident and ready? And, leaning his chin on his hands, he imagined the ride he might have had with her. A week-end was but a week-end, and he had missed three hours of it. Did he know anyone except himself who would have been such a flat? He did not.

He dressed for dinner early, and was first down. He would miss no more. But he missed Fleur, who came down last. He sat opposite her at dinner, and it was terrible—impossible to say anything for fear of saying the wrong thing, impossible to keep his eyes fixed on her in the only natural way; in sum, impossible to treat normally one with whom in fancy he had already been over the hills and far away; conscious too, all the time, that he must seem to her, to all of them, a dumb gawk. Yes, it was terrible! And she was talking so well—swooping with swift wing this way and that. Wonderful how she had learned an art which he found so disgustingly difficult. She must think him hopeless indeed!

His sister's eyes fixed on him with a certain astonishment, obliged him at last to look at Fleur; but instantly her eyes, very wide and eager, seeming to say: "Oh! for goodness' sake!" obliged him to look at Val; where a grin obliged him to look at his cutlet—that, at least, had no eyes, and no grin, and he ate it hastily.

"Jon is going to be a farmer," he heard Holly say; "a farmer and a poet."

He glanced up reproachfully, caught the comic lift of her eyebrow just like their father's, laughed, and felt better.

Val recounted the incident of Monsieur Prosper Profond; nothing could have been more favourable, for, in relating it, he regarded Holly, who in turn regarded him, while Fleur seemed to be regarding with a slight frown some thought of her own, and Jon was really free to look at her at last. She had on a white frock, very simple and well made; her arms were bare and her hair had a white rose in it. In just that swift moment of free vision, after such intense discomfort, Jon saw her sublimated, as one sees in the dark a slender white fruit tree; caught her like a verse of poetry flashed before the eyes of the mind, or a tune which floats out in the distance and dies.

He wondered giddily how old she was—she seemed so much more self-possessed and experienced than himself. Why mustn't he say they had met? He remembered suddenly his mother's face; puzzled, hurt-looking when she answered: "Yes, they're relations, but we don't know them." Impossible that his mother, who loved beauty, should not admire Fleur if she did know her!

Alone with Val after dinner, he sipped port deferentially and answered the advances of this new-found brother-in-law. As to riding (always the first consideration with Val) he could have the young chestnut, saddle and unsaddle it himself, and generally look after it when he brought it in. Jon said he was accustomed to all that at home, and saw that he had gone up one in his host's estimation.

"Fleur," said Val, "can't ride much yet, but she's keen. Of course her father doesn't know a horse from a cart-wheel. Does your Dad ride?"

"He used to; but now he's—you know, he's——" He stopped, so hating the word old. His father was old, and yet, and yet not old; no—never!

"Quite," muttered Val. "I used to know your brother up at Oxford ages ago, the one who died in the Boer War. We had a fight in New College Gardens. That was a queer business," he added, musing; "a good deal came out of it."

Jon's eyes opened wide; all was pushing him towards historical research, when his sister's voice said gently from the doorway:

"Come along, you two," and he rose, his heart pushing him towards something far more modern.

Fleur having declared that it was "simply too wonderful to stay indoors" they all went out. Moonlight was frosting the dew and an old sundial threw a long shadow. Two box hedges at right angles, dark and square,

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barred off the orchard. Fleur turned through that angled opening.

"Come on!" she called. Jon glanced at the others and followed. She was running among the trees like a ghost. All was lovely and foam-like above her, and there was a scent of old trunks and of nettles. She vanished. He thought he had lost her, then almost ran into her standing quite still.

"Isn't it jolly?" she cried, and Jon answered:

"Rather!"

She reached up, twisted off a blossom, and twirling it in her fingers said:

"I suppose I can call you Jon?"

"I should think so just."

"All right! But you know there's a feud between our families?"

Jon stammered: "Feud? Why?"

"Isn't it romantic and silly? That's why I pretended we hadn't met. Shall we get up early to-morrow morning and go for a walk before breakfast and have it out? I hate being slow about things, don't you?"

Jon murmured in a rapturous manner.

"Six o'clock, then. I think your mother's beautiful!"

Jon said fervently: "Yes, she is."

"I love all kinds of beauty," went on Fleur, "when it's exciting. I don't like Greek things a bit."

"What! Not Euripides?"

"Euripides? Oh, no! I can't bear Greek plays; they're so long. I think beauty's always swift. I like to look at *one* picture, for instance, and then run off. I can't bear a lot of things together. Look!" She held up her blossom in the moonlight. "That's better than all the orchard, I think."

And suddenly, with her other hand, she caught Jon's.

"Of all things in the world don't you think caution's the most awful? Smell the moonlight!"

She thrust the blossom against his face. Jon agreed giddily that of all things in the world caution was the worst and, bending over, kissed the hand which held his.

"That's nice and old-fashioned," said Fleur calmly. "You're frightfully silent, Jon. Still I like silence when it's swift." She let go his hand. "Did you think I dropped my handkerchief on purpose?"

"No!" cried Jon, intensely shocked.

"Well, I did, of course. Let's get back, or they'll think we're doing this on purpose, too." And again she ran like a ghost among the trees. Jon followed, with love in his heart, spring in his heart, and over all the moonlit, white, unearthly blossom. They came out where they had gone in, Fleur walking demurely.

"It's quite wonderful in there," she said dreamily to Holly.

Jon preserved silence, hoping against hope that she might be thinking it swift.

She bade him a casual and demure good-night, which made him think he had been dreaming. . . .

In her bedroom Fleur had flung off her gown, and, wrapped in a shapeless garment, with the white flower still in her hair, she looked like a mousmé, sitting cross-legged on her bed, writing by candlelight.

"DEAREST CHERRY,

"I believe I'm in love. I've got it in the neck, only the feeling is really lower down. He's a second cousin—such a child, about six months older and ten years younger than me. Boys always fall in love with their seniors, and girls with their juniors or with old men of forty. Don't laugh, but his eyes are the truest things I ever saw; and he's quite divinely silent! We had a most romantic first meeting in London under the Vospovitch Juno. And now he's sleeping in the next room and the moonlight's on the blossom; and to-morrow morning, before anybody's awake, we're going to walk off into Down fairyland. There's a feud between our families, which makes it really exciting. Yes! and I may have to use subterfuge and come on you for invitations—if so, you'll know why! My father doesn't want us to know each other, but I can't help that. Life's too short. He's got the most beautiful mother, with lovely silvery hair, and a young face with dark eyes. I'm staying with his sister—who married my cousin; it's all mixed-up, but I mean to pump her to-morrow. We've often talked about love being a spoil-sport; well, that's all tosh, it's the beginning of sport, and the sooner you feel it, my dear, the better for you.

"Jon (not simplified spelling, but short for Jolyon, which is a name in my family, they say) is the sort that lights up and goes out; about five feet ten, still growing, and I believe he's going to be a poet. If you laugh at me I've done with you for ever. I perceive all sorts of difficulties, but you know when I really want a thing I get it. One of the chief effects of love is that you see the air sort of inhabited, like seeing a face in the moon; and you feel—you feel dancy and soft at the same time, with a funny sensation—like a continual first sniff of orange blossom—just above your stays. This is my first, and I feel as if it were going to be my last, which is absurd, of course, by all the laws of Nature and morality. If you mock me I will smite you, and if you tell anybody I will never forgive you. So much so, that I almost don't think I'll send this letter. Anyway, I'll sleep over it. So good-night, my Cherry—oh!

"Your
"FLEUR."

VIII.

IDLE ON GRASS.

When those two young Forsytes emerged from the chine lane, and set their faces East towards the sun, there was not a cloud in heaven, and the Downs were dewy. They had come at a good bat up the slope and were

["TO LET" *continued overleaf.*]

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a little out of breath; if they had anything to say they did not say it, but marched in the early awkwardness of unbreakfasted morning under the songs of the larks. The stealing-out had been fun, but with the freedom of the tops the sense of conspiracy ceased, and gave place to dumbness.

"We've made one blooming error," said Fleur when they had gone half-a-mile. "I'm hungry."

Jon produced a stick of chocolate. They shared it and their tongues were loosened. They discussed the nature of their homes and previous existences, which had a kind of fascinating unreality up on that lonely height. There remained but one thing solid in Jon's past—his mother; but one thing solid in Fleur's—her father; and of these figures, as though seen in the distance with disapproving faces, they spoke little.

The Down dipped and rose again towards Chanctonbury Ring; a sparkle of far sea came into view, a sparrow-hawk hovered in the sun's eye so that the blood-nourished brown of his wings gleamed nearly red. Jon had a passion for birds and an aptitude for sitting very still to watch them; keen-sighted, and with a memory for what interested him, on birds he was almost worth listening to. But in Chanctonbury Ring there were none—its great beech temple was empty of life, and almost chilly at this early hour; they came out willingly again into the sun on the far side. It was Fleur's turn now. And she spoke of dogs and the way people treated them. It was wicked to keep them on chains! She would like to flog people who did that. Jon was astonished to find her so humanitarian. She knew a dog, it seemed, which some farmer near her home kept chained up at the end of his chicken run, in all weathers; it had almost lost its voice from barking!

"And the misery is," she said vehemently, "that if the poor thing didn't bark at everyone who passes, it wouldn't be kept there. I do think men are cunning brutes. I've let it go twice, on the sly; it's nearly bitten me both times, and then it goes simply mad with joy; but it always runs back home at last, and they chain it up again. If I had my way, I'd chain that man up."

Jon saw her teeth and her eyes gleam. "I'd brand him on his forehead with the word 'Brute'; that would teach him!"

Jon agreed that it would be a good remedy.

"It's their sense of property," he said, "which makes people chain things. The last generation thought of nothing but property, and that's why there was the War."

"Oh!" said Fleur; "I never thought of that. Your people and mine quarrelled about property. And anyway we've all got it—at least, I suppose your people have."

"Oh! yes, luckily; I don't suppose I shall be any good at making money."

"If you were, I don't believe I should like you."

Jon slipped his hand tremulously under her arm.

Fleur looked round at him:

> "Jon, Jon, the farmer's son,
> Stole a pig, and away he run!"

Jon's arm crept round her waist.

"This is rather sudden," said Fleur calmly; "do you often do it?"

Jon dropped his arm. But when she laughed his arm stole back again; it all appeared to him too marvellous.

> "'O who will o'er the downs so free,
> O who will with me ride?
> O who will up and follow me——'

Sing, Jon!"

Jon sang. The larks joined in, then the sheep-bells, and an early morning church far away over in Steyning. They went on from tune to tune, till Fleur said:

"My God! I am hungry now!"

Jon cried out, distressed:

"Oh! I *am* sorry."

Fleur looked round into his face.

"Jon, you're rather a darling."

She pressed his hand against her waist, and Jon almost reeled with happiness. A yellow and white dog coursing a hare startled them apart. They watched the two vanish down the slope, till Fleur said with a sigh: "He'll never catch it, thank goodness! What's the time? Mine's stopped. I never wound it."

Jon looked at his watch. "By Jove," he said, "mine's stopped, too!"

They walked on again, but only hand-in-hand.

"If the grass is dry," said Fleur, "let's sit down for half-a-minute."

Jon took off his coat, and they shared it.

"Smell! Actually wild thyme!"

With his arm round her waist again, they sat some minutes in silence.

"We are goats!" cried Fleur, jumping up; "we shall be most fearfully late, and look so silly, and put them on their guard. Look here, Jon! We only came out to get an appetite for breakfast and lost our way. See?"

"Yes," said Jon.

"It's serious; there'll be a stopper put on us. Are you a good liar?"

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"I believe not very, but I can try."

Fleur frowned.

"You know," she said, "I realise that they don't mean us to be friends."

"Why not?"

"I told you why."

"But that's silly."

"Yes; but you don't know my father!"

"I suppose he's fearfully fond of you?"

"You see, I'm an only child. And so are you—of your mother. Isn't it a bore? There's so much expected of one. By the time they've done expecting, one's as good as dead."

"Yes," muttered Jon, "life's beastly short. One wants to live for ever and know everything."

"And love everybody?"

"No," cried Jon; "I only want to love one—you."

"Indeed! You're coming on! Oh, look! There's the chalk-pit; we can't be very far now. Let's run!"

Jon followed, wondering fearfully if he had offended her.

The chalk-pit was full of sunshine and the murmuration of bees. Fleur flung back her hair.

"Well," she said, "in case of accidents, you may give me one kiss, Jon," and she pushed her cheek forward. With ecstasy he kissed that hot, soft cheek.

"Now, remember! We lost our way—and leave it to me as much as you can. I'm going to be rather beastly to you; it's safer. Try and be beastly to me!"

Jon shook his head. "That's impossible."

"Just to please me; till five o'clock, say."

"Anybody will be able to see through it," said Jon gloomily.

"Well, do your best. Look! There they are! Wave your hat. Oh, you haven't got one! Well, I'll cooee. Get a little away from me and look sulky."

Five minutes later, entering the house and doing his utmost to look sulky, Jon heard her clear voice in the dining-room:

"Oh, I'm simply *ravenous!* He's going to be a farmer—and he loses his way. The boy's an idiot!"

The fact that there is a feud between their families introduces a spice of adventure into Fleur's relationship with Jon. Her woman's instinct warns her that their intercourse will be opposed. Nothing in the way of strategy is to be expected from Jon. She realises from the first that the situation is hers to make or mar. With what skill she handles it transpires in the March instalment.

FISHERMAN BILL.

Fisherman Bill be young and strong;
Fisherman Bill be wise;
Says he don't care not a couple of figs
For a languishin' pair o' blue eyes.
"Give me a boat!" says Fisherman Bill,
"A boat and a sturdy net!"—
But take it from me, lad, you'll have to look out,
For the wimmen'll have ye yet!

There's many a maid lives hereabouts
As looks at him wonderful kind,
And matterimony ain't easy to dodge
When a woman she's made up her mind!
So take out yer boat, young Fisherman Bill,
Yer boat and yer sturdy net—
But take it from me, lad, it ain't goin' to last,
For the wimmen'll have ye yet!

Mabel Dean.

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Mr. Editor— His Page.

18 *Henrietta Street.*
London, W.C. 2.
12-1-1921.

To-day, unfortunately, the British citizen pays, roughly, one third of his earnings in income tax. Musing on the fact, it occurs to me that one tremendous result of the war is that money, as money, has fallen from its pedestal, possibly for ever. Think for a moment:

Does Money Talk?

Before the war the sovereign was worth twenty shillings in this country, so many francs in France, so many marks in Germany. Now the pound note has the purchasing value of, say, ten pre-war shillings at home, is worth more than twice as many francs as the pre-war sovereign, and goodness knows how many more marks. In Vienna and Warsaw the disproportion is still more ludicrous. Briefly money has become meaningless.

What Does It Say?

Before the war the acquisition of money for money's sake became, in some circles, almost a religion. One despised or respected a man for his money-making capacity. Now it is almost impossible to judge a man by the money standard. How shall you or I ever become very rich when, supposing we earn £10,000 a year, we must pay £27,000 of it to the Government in income tax and super tax?

Is it a bad thing that, once the bare necessities of life are acquired, money has ceased to mean very much? I doubt it. Money never did and never will buy the most acute pleasures of life. You cannot buy affection, love, a beautiful sunset, health, or any of the things that really matter. The essentials of life are warmth, food, and shelter. Beyond these money counts hardly at all.

We can still see a great play for a few shillings, and read a wonderful book (and The Royal Magazine*) for a few pence. And spring, the most beautiful thing in the world, which costs absolutely nothing — spring is almost here.*

A Flag Day?

A week ago a soldier stationed in India wrote sending a year's subscription. In his letter he said that the Royal *gave him more pleasure than any other magazine, and he couldn't depend on getting it regularly in India. The day his letter came was rather a flag-day for me. I know from experience what it means to be stationed thousands of miles away. The few things one does get out from home one wants very badly. This man wanted the* Royal.

For Your Own Room.

You may have noticed that usually there is no lettering on the actual design of the Royal *covers. A girl suggested this idea to me. She said she liked to remove a cover that pleased her, have it framed in passe-partout and hang it in her own room. If the lettering ran across the design it spoiled the picture from her point of view. I've seen some of her cover-pictures after they were framed, and they look rather jolly, so I pass on the idea herewith.*

Don't forget to take home:

Every Monday - -	Pearson's Weekly, Home Notes.
Every Tuesday - -	Peg's Paper.
Every Thursday - -	Smallholder, Scout.
22nd of the Month -	The Novel Magazine.
1st of Month - - -	Pearson's Magazine, Home Cookery.

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Photo *Mishkin Studios.*

All right-minded young men become poetical in the springtime, and who can wonder when there are girls as beautiful as Miss Anderson to inspire them?

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Star-Dust and Peach-Blossom

By Herbert Selwyn.

Already the hounds of spring are on winter's traces, and there is borne on the air the lisp of leaves and ripple of rain. For these very reasons this article, which touches on Youth, and Love, and Springtime, seems appropriate. The illustrations are from photographs of Miss Alveena Anderson, specially taken by Elwin Neame.

SENTIMENTALLY, spring has been turned into a joke of the so-called comic papers, and spring poetry is a bye-word, but in reality all these guffaws are very sad. They simply indicate that the perpetrators are either too old for Romance or have never been young enough in spirit to catch a glimpse of her ethereal form.

As a spoonful of fact is worth a ton of theory, let us consider the case of a young lad who adores a maiden who adores him back, and I picture their idyllic soul-state in that ecstatic period—namely, the sweet of the year.

I think, on the whole, the young lad is more to be envied than the maiden, for, while she merely evokes his admiration, he has all the joy of expressing it. To him she is a being of star-dust and peach-blossom, and round her he weaves those shining fairy-tales which only a lover can conceive.

To see her curled up in the firelight is like all the ineffable vistas of Paradise. The curve of her shoulder, the patter of her feet, are little love-lyrics that no one could ever write because words are so hopeless.

She rises in the dewy morning, and the scent of her scented bath is more than lilies of the valley—or so her lover imagines. Really she uses simple soap and water like anybody else, because she is a sincere, natural person.

Her hair is a mantle of night falling gently over her moonlit shoulders. To her lover there is a tremendous mystery about her

Frock and Wrap by Marie.

To her lover there is a tremendous mystery about a girl's clothes; in an evening frock she seems to him like Venus rising from the sea.

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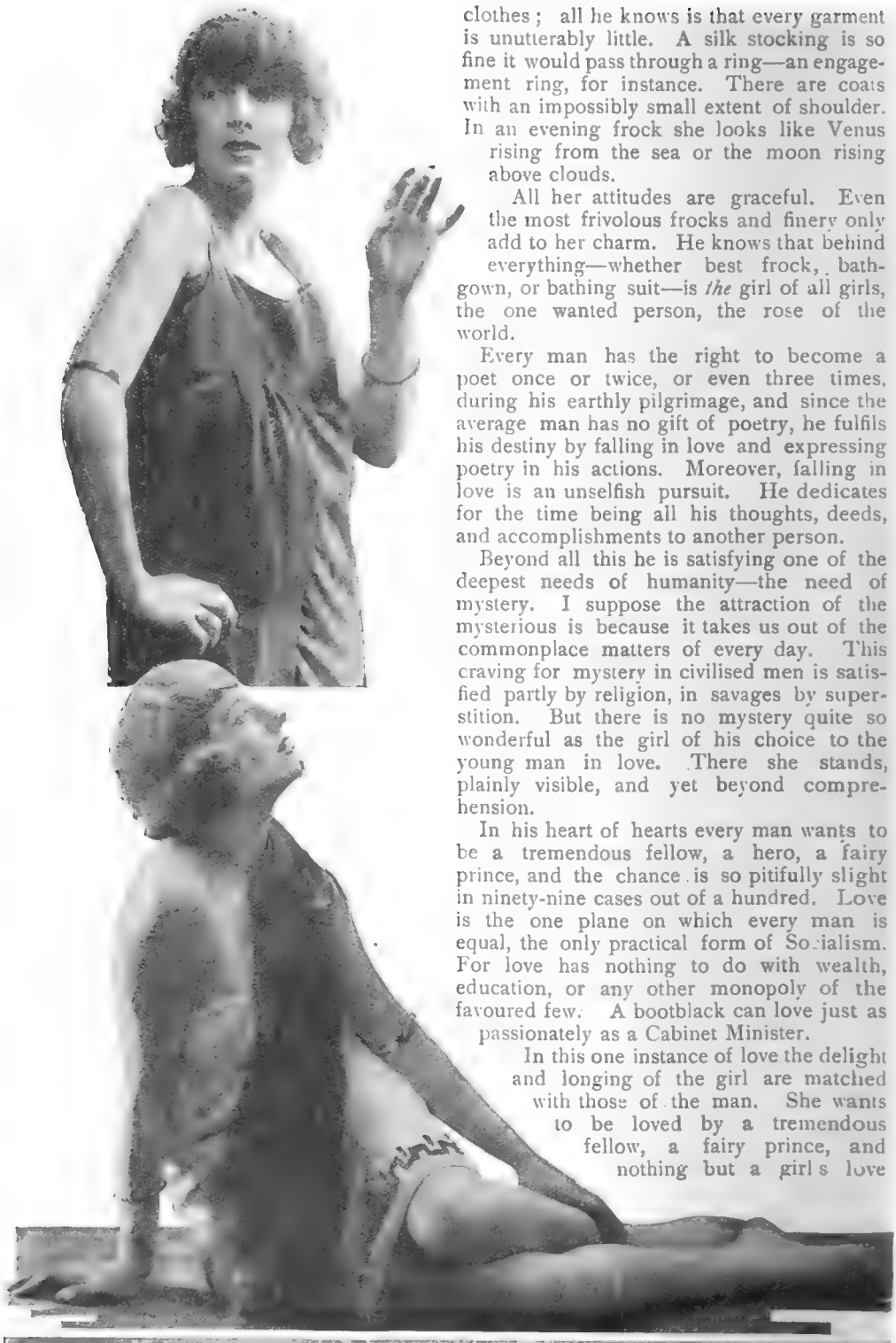

clothes; all he knows is that every garment is unutterably little. A silk stocking is so fine it would pass through a ring—an engagement ring, for instance. There are coats with an impossibly small extent of shoulder. In an evening frock she looks like Venus rising from the sea or the moon rising above clouds.

All her attitudes are graceful. Even the most frivolous frocks and finery only add to her charm. He knows that behind everything—whether best frock, bath-gown, or bathing suit—is *the* girl of all girls, the one wanted person, the rose of the world.

Every man has the right to become a poet once or twice, or even three times, during his earthly pilgrimage, and since the average man has no gift of poetry, he fulfils his destiny by falling in love and expressing poetry in his actions. Moreover, falling in love is an unselfish pursuit. He dedicates for the time being all his thoughts, deeds, and accomplishments to another person.

Beyond all this he is satisfying one of the deepest needs of humanity—the need of mystery. I suppose the attraction of the mysterious is because it takes us out of the commonplace matters of every day. This craving for mystery in civilised men is satisfied partly by religion, in savages by superstition. But there is no mystery quite so wonderful as the girl of his choice to the young man in love. There she stands, plainly visible, and yet beyond comprehension.

In his heart of hearts every man wants to be a tremendous fellow, a hero, a fairy prince, and the chance is so pitifully slight in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. Love is the one plane on which every man is equal, the only practical form of Socialism. For love has nothing to do with wealth, education, or any other monopoly of the favoured few. A bootblack can love just as passionately as a Cabinet Minister.

In this one instance of love the delight and longing of the girl are matched with those of the man. She wants to be loved by a tremendous fellow, a fairy prince, and nothing but a girl's love

Only a very prosaic young man would connect soap and water with his lady love's toilet—fairy dew, fragrant as lilies of the valley, is the only fitting medium for her bath.

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will transform the average man into these superb beings.

I think it was Julius Cæsar who said: "Better be first in a little Iberian village than second in Rome." All girls have engraved this saying on their heart of hearts. But in the stress of life it is increasingly difficult to be first in any undertaking, for the competition is terribly keen. The only place where the average girl can be first is in some man's heart, and the only supreme place for the average man is in some girl's.

Love and spring-tide together make a wonderful elixir the intoxication of which wafts boy and girl souls to the mountain-tops. A return journey may follow, but a day in those courts is better than a lifetime in the plains, which explains the fact that some men, and even women, engage in more than one love affair.

The girl of all girls can never be anything but graceful to the man who loves her; a mere turn of her arm is a love lyric, her hair a madrigal, her thighs falling gently over her moonlit shoulders.

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"To Let."

By John Galsworthy.

Illustrated by W. Hatherell, R.I.

Picture the feelings of Soames Forsyte, whose daughter, Fleur, the apple of his eye, adores Jon, the son of his divorced wife, Irene—(the only woman he ever really loved)—and you begin to realise the wonderful possibilities of this remarkable story. In the first instalment a dramatic meeting between the young people, Jon and Fleur, took place. Soames is filled with misgiving lest Fleur should learn that Jon is the son of his first wife. Irene and her husband, Jolyon Forsyte, are equally afraid that their son, Jon, who is obviously in love with Fleur, will discover that his mother was divorced by Fleur's father. The February instalment opened with Soames' visit to Timothy, the oldest surviving member of the Forsyte family. It records how Fleur's week-end visit to Holly Dartie—(Jolyon's daughter by a previous wife)—brings her again in contact with Jon, who is living with Holly and her husband, Val, while engaged in studying farming. It is here, amid the Sussex Downs, that the casual meeting between Fleur and Jon develops into a charming idyll. Meanwhile, Soames in his riverside house at Mapledurham, is a prey to uneasiness at Fleur's delayed return.

IX.

GOYA.

LUNCH was over and Soames mounted to the picture gallery in his house near Mapledurham. He had what Annette called "a grief." Fleur was not yet home. She had been expected on Wednesday; had wired that it would be Friday; and again on Friday that it would be Sunday afternoon; and here were her Aunt, and her cousins the Cardigans, and this fellow Profond, and everything flat as a pancake for the want of her. He stood before his Gauguin—sorest point of his collection. He had bought the ugly great thing with two early Matisses before the War, because there was such a fuss about those Post-Impressionist chaps. And now they were getting "old game" without ever having had a chance to go up in price, and he had always thought them hideous into the bargain. He was wondering whether Profond would take them off his hands—the fellow seemed not to know what to do with his money—when his sister's voice said: "I think that's a horrid thing, Soames," and he saw that Winifred had followed him up.

"Oh! you *do?*" he said drily; "I gave five hundred for it."

"Fancy! Women aren't made like that even if they are black."

Soames uttered a g'um laugh; he knew it. "You didn't come up to tell me that."

"Do you know that Jolyon's boy is staying with Val and his wife?"

Soames spun round.

"What?"

"Yes," drawled Winifred; "he's gone to live with them there while he learns farming."

Soames had turned abruptly; her voice pursued him while he walked up and down. "I warned Val that neither of them was to be spoken to about old matters."

"Why didn't you tell me before?"

Winifred shrugged her substantial shoulders.

"Fleur does what she likes. You've always spoiled her. Besides, my dear boy, what's the harm?"

"The harm!" muttered Soames. "Why, she——" he checked himself. The Juno, the handkerchief, Fleur's eyes, her questions, and now this delay in her return—the symptoms seemed to him so sinister that, faithful to his nature, he could not part with them.

"I think you take too much care," said Winifred; "if I were you, I should tell her of that old matter. It's no good thinking that girls in these days are like they used to be. Where they pick up their knowledge I can't tell, but they seem to know everything."

Over Soames' face, closely composed,

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passed a sort of spasm, and Winifred added, hastily:

"If you don't like to speak of it, I could for you."

Soames shook his head. Unless there was absolute necessity the thought that his adored daughter should learn of that old scandal hurt his pride too much.

"No," he said, "not yet. Never if I can help it."

"Nonsense, my dear. Think what people are!"

"Twenty years is a long time," muttered Soames. "Outside our family, who's likely to remember?"

Winifred was silenced. She inclined more and more to that peace and quietness of which Montague Dartie had deprived her in her youth. And, since pictures always depressed her, she soon went down again.

Soames passed into the corner where, side by side, hung his real Goya, and the copy of the fresco "La Vendimia." His acquisition of the real Goya rather beautifully illustrated the cobweb of vested interests and passions which mesh the bright-winged fly of human life. The real Goya's noble owner's ancestor had come into possession of it during some Spanish war—it was, in a word, loot. The noble owner had remained in ignorance of its value until in the late nineties an enterprising critic discovered that a Spanish painter named Goya was a genius. It was only a fair Goya, but almost unique in England, and the noble owner became a marked man.

Having many possessions and that aristocratic culture, which independent of mere sensuous enjoyment is founded on the sounder principle that one must know everything and be fearfully interested in life, he had fully intended to keep an article which contributed to his reputation while he was alive, and to leave it to the nation after he was dead. Fortunately for Soames, the House of Lords was violently attacked in 1909, and the noble owner became alarmed and angry.

"If," he said to himself, "they think they can have it both ways they are very much mistaken. So long as they leave me in quiet enjoyment the nation can have some of my pictures at my death. But if the nation is going to bait me, and rob me like this, I'm damned if I won't sell the —— lot. They can't have my private property and my public spirit—both."

He brooded in this fashion for several months till one morning, after reading the speech of a certain statesman, he telegraphed to his agent to come down and bring Bodkin. On going over the collection, Bodkin, than whose opinion on market values none was more sought, pronounced that with a free hand to sell to America, Germany, and other places where there was an interest in art, a lot more money could be made than by selling in England. The noble owner's public spirit—he said—was well-known, but the pictures were unique. The noble owner put this opinion in his pipe and smoked it for a year. At the end of that time he read another speech by the same statesman, and telegraphed to his agents, "Give Bodkin a free hand."

It was at this juncture that Bodkin conceived the idea which salved the Goya and two other unique pictures for the native country of the noble owner. With one hand Bodkin offered the pictures on the foreign market, with the other he formed a list of private British collectors. Having obtained what he considered the highest possible bids from across the seas, he submitted pictures and bids to the private British collectors, and invited them, of their public spirit, to outbid. In three instances (including the Goya) out of twenty-one he was successful. And why? One of the private collectors made buttons—he had made so many that he desired that his wife should be called Lady "Buttons." He therefore bought an unique picture at a great cost, and gave it to the nation. It was "part," his friends said, "of his general game."

The second of the private collectors was an Americo-phobe, and bought an unique picture to "spite the damned Yanks." The third of the private collectors was Soames, who—more sober than either of the others—bought after a visit to Madrid, because he was certain that Goya was still on the upgrade. Goya was not booming at the moment, but he would come again, and, looking at that portrait, Hogarthian, Manetesque in its directness, but with its own queer sharp beauty of paint, he was perfectly satisfied still that he had made no error, heavy though the price had been—heaviest he had ever paid. And next to it was hanging the copy of "La Vendimia." There she was—the little wretch—looking back at him in her dreamy mood, the mood he loved best because he felt so much safer when she looked like that.

He was still gazing when the scent of a cigar impinged on his nostrils, and a voice said:

"Well, Mr. Forsyde, what you goin' to do with this small lot?"

That Belgian chap, whose mother—as if Flemish blood were not enough—had been

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After dinner his mother played; she seemed to play all the things he liked best. . . . Once, while he listened, he forgot himself and glanced at his father——

Armenian! Subduing a natural irritation, he said:

"Are you a judge of pictures?"

"Well, I've god a small lot myself."

"Any Post-Impressionists?"

"Ye-es, I rather like them."

"What do you think of this?" said Soames, pointing to the Gauguin.

Monsieur Profond protruded his lower lip and short-pointed beard.

"Rather fine, I think," he said; "do you wand to sell it?"

Soames checked his instinctive: "Not particularly"—he would not chaffer with this alien.

"Yes," he said.

"Whad do you wand for it?"

"What I gave."

"All righd," said Monsieur Profond. "I'll be glad to take that small picture.

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—In that other easy chair. What was Dad looking like that for? The expression on his face was so sad and puzzling. [Page 364 col. 2.]

Post-Impressionists—they're awful dead, but they're amusin'. I don't care for pictures much, but I've got some, just a small lot."

"What *do* you care for?"

Monsieur Profond shrugged his shoulders.

"Life's awful like a lot of monkeys scramblin' for emdy nuds," he said.

"You're young," said Soames shortly. If the fellow must make a generalisation, he needn't suggest that the forms of property lacked solidity!

"I don' worry," replied Monsieur Profond, smiling, "we're born, and we die. Half the world's starvin'. I feed a small lot of babies out in my mother's country, but whad's the use? Mighd as well throw my money in the river."

Soames looked at him and turned back towards his Goya. He didn't know what the fellow wanted.

"What shall I make my cheque for?" pursued Monsieur Profond.

"Five hundred," said Soames shortly; "but I don't want you to take it if you don't care for it more than that."

"Thad's all righd," said Monsieur Profond; "I'd be 'appy to 'ave that picture."

He wrote a cheque with a fountain pen heavily chased with gold. Soames watched the process uneasily. How on earth had the fellow known that he wanted to sell that picture? Monsieur Profond held out the cheque.

"The English are awful funny about pictures," he said. "So are the French, so are my people. They're all awful funny."

"I don't understand you," said Soames stiffly.

"Like hats," said Monsieur Profond enigmatically, "small or large, turnin' up or down—jusd the fashion. Awful funny." And, smiling, he drifted out of the gallery again, blue and solid like the smoke of his excellent cigar.

Soames had taken the cheque, feeling as if the intrinsic value of ownership had been called in question. "He's a cosmopolitan," he thought, watching Profond emerge from under the veranda with Annette, and saunter down the lawn towards the river. What his wife saw in the fellow he didn't know, unless it was that he could speak her language; and

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there passed in Soames what Monsieur Profond would have called a "small doubt," whether Annette was not too handsome to be walking with anyone so "cosmopolitan." Even at that distance he could see the blue fumes from Profond's cigar wreathe out in the quiet sunlight; and his grey buckskin shoes and his grey hat—the fellow was a dandy! And he could see that quick turn of his wife's head, so very straight on her desirable neck and shoulders. That turn of her neck always seemed to him a little too showy, and—in the "Queen of all I survey" manner—not quite distinguished. He watched them walk along the path at the bottom of the garden. A young man in flannels joined them down there—a Sunday caller no doubt, from up the river. He went back to his Goya. He was still staring at that replica of Fleur and worrying over Winifred's news when his wife's voice said:

"Mr. Michael Mont, Soames. You invited him to see your pictures."

There was the cheerful young man of the Gallery off Cork Street!

"Turned up, you see, sir; I live only four miles from Pangbourne. Jolly day, isn't it?"

Confronted with the results of his expansiveness Soames scrutinised his visitor. The young man's mouth was excessively large and curly—he seemed always grinning. Why didn't he grow the rest of those idiotic little moustaches, which made him look like a music-hall buffoon? What on earth were young men about, deliberately lowering their class with these toothbrushes or little slug whiskers? Ugh! Affected young idiots! In other respects he was presentable and his flannels very clean.

"Happy to see you!" he said.

The young man, who had been turning his head from side to side, became transfixed. "I say!" he said, "'some' picture!"

Soames saw, with mixed sensations, that he had addressed the remark to the Goya copy.

"Yes," he said drily, "that's not a Goya. It's a copy. I had it painted because it reminded me of my daughter."

"By Jove! I thought I knew the face, sir. Is she here?"

The frankness of his interest almost disarmed Soames.

"She'll be in after tea," he said. "Shall we go round the pictures?"

And Soames began that round which never tired him. He had not anticipated much intelligence from one who had mistaken a copy for an original, but as they passed from section to section, period to period, he was startled by the young man's frank and relevant remarks. Natively shrewd himself, and even sensuous beneath his mask, Soames had not spent thirty-eight years over his one hobby without knowing something more about pictures than their market values. He was, as it were, the missing link between the artist and the commercial public. Art for art's sake and all that, of course, was cant. But æsthetics and good taste were necessary. The appreciation of enough persons of good taste was what gave a work of art its permanent market value, or in other words made it "a work of art." There was no real cleavage. And he was sufficiently accustomed to sheep-like and unseeing visitors, to be intrigued by one who did not hesitate to say of Mauve, "Good old haystacks!" or of James Maris, "Didn't he just paint and paper 'em! Mathew was the real swell, sir; you could dig into his surfaces!" It was after the young man had whistled before a Whistler, with the words, "D'you think he ever really saw a naked woman, sir?" that Soames remarked:

"What *are* you, Mr. Mont, if I may ask?"

"I, sir? I *was* going to be a painter, but the War knocked that. Then in the trenches, you know, I used to dream of the Stock Exchange, snug and warm and just noisy enough. But the Peace knocked that; shares seem off, don't they? I've only been demobbed about a year. What do you recommend, sir?"

"Have you got money?"

"Well," answered the young man, "I've got a father; I kept him alive during the War, so he's bound to keep me alive now. Though, of course, there's the question whether he ought to be allowed to hang on to his property. What do you think about that, sir?"

Soames, pale and defensive, smiled.

"The old man has fits when I tell him he may have to work yet. He's got land, you know; it's a fatal disease."

"This is my real Goya," said Soames drily.

"By George, he *was* a swell! I saw a Goya in Munich once that bowled me middle stump. A most evil-looking old woman in the most gorgeous lace. *He* made no compromise with the public taste. That old boy was 'some' explosive; he must have smashed up a lot of convention in his day. Couldn't he just paint! He makes Velasquez stiff, don't you think?"

"I have no Velasquez," said Soames.

The young man stared. "No," he said; "only nations or profiteers can afford him. I

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"Look, Jon, you can just see where I've got to cross the river. There round the bend, where the woods begin." Jon saw a gable, a chimney or two . . . and felt his heart sink.

[Page 433, col. 2.]

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suppose. I say, why shouldn't all the bankrupt nations sell their Velasquez and Titians and other swells to the profiteers by force, and then pass a law that anyone who holds a picture by an Old Master—see schedule—must hang it in a public gallery? There seems something in that."

"Shall we go down to tea?" said Soames.

The young man's ears seemed to droop on his skull. "He's not dense," thought Soames, following him off the premises.

Goya, with his satiric and surpassing precision, his original "line," and the daring of his light and shade, could have reproduced to admiration the group assembled round Annette's tea-tray in the inglenook below.

He alone, perhaps, of painters would have done justice to the sunlight filtering through a screen of creeper, to the lovely pallor of brass, the old cut glasses, the thin slices of lemon in pale amber tea; justice to Annette in her black lacey dress—there was something of the fair Spaniard in her beauty, though it lacked the spirituality of that rare type; to Winifred's grey-haired, corseted solidity; to Soames, of a certain grey and flat-cheeked distinction; to the vivacious Michael Mont, pointed in ear and eye; to Imogen, dark, luscious of glance, growing a little stout; to Prosper Profond with his expression as who should say, "Well, Mr. Goya, whad's the use of paintin' this small party?"—finally, to Jack Cardigan, with his shining stare and tanned sanguinity betraying the moving principle: "I'm English, and I live to be fit."

Curious, by the way, that Imogen, who as a girl had declared solemnly one day at Timothy's that she would never marry a good man—they were so dull—should have married Jack Cardigan, in whom health had so destroyed all traces of original sin, that she might have retired to rest with ten thousand other Englishmen without knowing the difference from the one she had chosen to repose beside.

"Oh," she would say of him in her "amusing" way, "Jack keeps himself so fear ully fit; he's never had a day's illness in his life. He went right through the War without a finger-ache. You really can't imagine how fit he is!" Indeed, he was so "fit" that he couldn't see when she was flirting, which was such a comfort in a way.

All the same, she was quite fond of him, so far as one could be of a sports-machine, and of the two little Cardigans made after his pattern. Her eyes just then were comparing him maliciously with Prosper Profond. There was no small sport or game which Monsieur Profond had not played at, too, it seemed, from skittles to tarpon-fishing, and worn out every one.

Imogen would sometimes wish that they had worn out Jack, who continued to play at them and talk of them with the simple zeal of a schoolgirl learning hockey; at the age of great-uncle Timothy she well knew that Jack would be playing carpet golf in her bedroom and "wiping somebody's eye."

He was telling them now how he had "pipped the pro—a charmin' fellow, playin' a very good game," at the last hole this morning; and how he had pulled down to Caversham since lunch, and trying to incite Prosper Profond to play him a set of tennis after tea—do him good—"keep him fit."

"But whad's the use of keepin' fit?" said Monsieur Profond.

"Yes, sir," said Michael Mont, "what do you keep fit for?"

"Jack," cried Imogen, enchanted, "what *do* you keep fit for?"

Jack Cardigan stared with all his health. The questions were like the buzz of a mosquito, and he put up his hand to wipe them away. During the War, of course, he had kept fit to kill Germans; now that it was over he either did not know or shrank in delicacy from explanation of his moving principle.

"But he's right," said Monsieur Profond unexpectedly, "there's nothin' left but keepin' fit."

The saying, too deep for Sunday afternoon, would have passed unanswered but for the mercurial nature of young Mont.

"Good!" he cried. "That's the great discovery of the War. We all thought we were progressing—now we know we're only changing."

"For the worse," said Monsieur Profond genially.

"How you are cheerful, Prosper!" murmured Annette.

"You come and play tennis!" said Jack Cardigan; "you've got the hump. We'll soon take that down. D'you play, Mr. Mont?"

"I hit the ball about, sir."

At this juncture Soames rose, ruffled in that deep instinct of preparation for the future which guided his existence.

"When Fleur comes——" he heard Jack Cardigan say.

Ah! and why didn't she come? He passed through drawing-room, hall, and porch out on to the drive, and stood there listening for the car. All was still and Sunday-fied; the lilacs in full flower scented the air. There were white clouds like the feathers of ducks

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gilded by the sunlight. Memory of the day when Fleur was born, and he had waited in such agony with her life and her mother's balanced in her hands, came to him sharply. He had saved her then, to be the flower of his life. And now? Was she going to give him trouble—pain—give him trouble? He did not like the look of things.

A blackbird broke in on his reverie with an evening song—a great, big fellow up in that acacia tree. Soames had taken quite an interest in his birds of late years: he and Fleur would walk round and watch them; her eyes were sharp as needles, and she knew every nest. He saw her dog, a retriever, lying on the drive in a patch of sunlight, and called to him. "Halio, old fellow, waiting for her too!" The dog came slowly with a grudging tail, and Soames mechanically laid a pat on his head. The dog, the bird, the lilac, all were part of Fleur for him; no more, no less. "Too fond of her!" he thought, "too fond!" He was like a man uninsured, with his ships at sea. Uninsured again—as in that other time, so long ago, when he would wander dumb and jealous in the wilderness of London, longing for that woman—his first wife—the mother of this infernal boy. Ah! there was the car at last! It drew up, it had luggage, but no Fleur.

"Miss Fleur is walking up, sir, by the towing path."

Walking all those miles? Soames stared. The man's face had the beginning of a smile on it. What was he grinning at? And very quickly he turned, saying: "All right, Sims!" and went into the house. He mounted to the picture gallery once more. He had from there a view of the river bank, and stood with his eyes fixed on it, oblivious of the fact that it would be an hour at least before her figure showed there. Walking up! And that fellow's grin! The boy——! He turned abruptly from the window. He couldn't spy on her. If she wanted to keep things from him, she must; he could not spy on her.

His heart felt empty, and bitterness mounted from it into his very mouth. The staccato shouts of Jack Cardigan pursuing the ball, the laugh of young Mont rose in the stillness and came in. He hoped they were making that chap Profond run. And the girl in "La Vendimia" stood with her arm akimbo and her dreamy eyes looking past him. "I've done all I could for you," he thought, "since you were no higher than my knee. You aren't going to—to—hurt me, are you?"

But the Goya copy answered not, brilliant in colour just beginning to tone down. "There's no real life in it," thought Soames. "Why doesn't she come?"

X.

TRIO.

Among those four Forsytes of the third, and, as one might say, fourth generation, at Wansdon under the Downs, a week-end prolonged unto the ninth day had stretched the crossing threads of tenacity almost to snapping point. Never had Fleur been so "*fine*." Holly so watchful. Val so stable-secretive. Jon so silent and disturbed. What he learned of farming in that week might have been balanced on the point of a penknife and puffed off. He, whose nature was essentially averse from intrigue, and whose adoration of Fleur disposed him to think that any need for concealing it was "skittles," chafed and fretted, yet obeyed, taking what relief he could in the few moments when they were alone. On Thursday, while they were standing in the bay window of the drawing-room, dressed for dinner, she said to him:

"Jon, I'm going home on Sunday by the 3.40 from Paddington; if you were to go home on *Saturday* you could come up on Sunday and take me down, and just get back here by the last train, after. You *were* going home anyway, weren't you?"

Jon nodded.

"Anything to be with you," he said, "only why need I pretend—"

Fleur slipped her little finger into his palm:

"You have no instinct, Jon; you *must* leave things to me. It's serious about our people. We've simply got to be secret at present, if we want to be together." The door was opened, and she added clearly: "You *are* a duffer, Jon."

Something turned over within Jon; he could not bear this subterfuge about a feeling so natural, so overwhelming, and so sweet.

On Friday night about eleven he had packed his bag, and was leaning out at his window, half miserable and half lost in a dream of Paddington Station, when he heard a tiny sound, as of a finger-nail tapping on his door. He rushed to it and listened. Again the sound. It *was* a nail. He opened. Oh! What a lovely thing came in!

"I wanted to show you my fancy dress," it said, and struck an attitude at the foot of his bed.

Jon drew a long breath and leaned against the door. The apparition wore white muslin on its head, a fichu round its bare neck over a wine-coloured dress, fulled out below its slender waist. It held one arm akimbo, and

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the other raised right-angled, holding a fan which touched its head.

"This ought to be a basket of grapes," it whispered, "but I haven't got it here. It's my Goya dress. And this is the attitude of the picture. Do you like it?"

"It's a dream."

The apparition pirouetted. "Touch it and see."

Jon knelt down and took the skirt reverently.

"Grape colour," came the whisper, "all grapes—La Vendimia, the vintage."

Jon's fingers scarcely touched each side of the waist; he looked up, with adoring eyes.

"Oh! Jon," it whispered; bent, kissed his forehead, pirouetted again, and, gliding out, was gone.

Jon stayed on his knees, and his head fell forward against the bed. How long he stayed like that he did not know. The little noises of the tapping nail, the feet, the skirts rustling—as in a dream—went on before him; and before his closed eyes the figure stood and smiled and whispered, a faint perfume of narcissus lingering in the air. And his forehead where it had been kissed had a little cool place between the brows, like the imprint of a flower. Love filled his soul, that love of boy for girl which knows so little, hopes so much, would not brush the down off for the world, and must become in time a fragrant memory—a searing passion—a humdrum mateship—or, once in a blue moon, vintage full and sweet with sunset colour on the grapes.

Enough has been said about Jon Forsyte here and in another place to show what long marches lay between him and his great-great-grandfather, the first Jolyon, in Dorset down by the sea. Jon was sensitive as a girl, more sensitive than nine out of ten girls of the day; imaginative as one of his half-sister June's "lame duck" painters; affectionate as a son of his father and his mother naturally would be. And yet, in his inner tissue, there was something of the old founder of his family, a secret tenacity of soul, a dread of showing his feelings, a determination not to know when he was beaten.

Sensitive, imaginative, affectionate boys get a bad time at school, but Jon had instinctively kept his nature dark and been but normally unhappy there. Only with his mother had he, up till then, been absolutely frank and natural; and when he went home to Robin Hill that Saturday his heart was heavy because Fleur had said that he must not be frank and natural with her from whom he had never yet kept anything, must not even tell her that they had met again unless he found that she knew already. So intolerable did this seem to him that he was very near to telegraphing an excuse and staying up in London. And the first thing his mother said to him was:

"So you've had our little friend of the confectioner's there, Jon. What is she like on second thoughts?"

With relief and a high colour Jon answered:

"Oh, awfully jolly, Mum."

Her arm pressed his. "That's nice."

Jon had never loved her so much as in that minute, which seemed to falsify Fleur's fears and to release his soul. He turned to look at her, but something in her smiling face—something which only he perhaps would have caught—stopped the words bubbling up in him. Could fear go with a smile? If so there was fear in her face. And out of Jon tumbled quite other words, about farming, Holly and the Downs. Talking fast, he waited for her to come back to Fleur. But she did not. Nor did his father mention her, though of course he, too, must know. What deprivation and killing of reality was in this silence about Fleur—when he was so full of her; when his mother was so full of Jon, and his father so full of his mother! And so the trio spent the evening of that Saturday.

After dinner his mother played; she seemed to play all the things he liked best, and he sat with one knee clasped and his hair standing up where his fingers had run through it. He gazed at his mother while she played, but he saw Fleur—Fleur in the moonlit orchard, Fleur in the sunlit gravel pit, Fleur in that fancy dress, swaying, whispering, stooping, kissing his forehead. Once, while he listened, he forgot himself and glanced at his father in that other easy chair. What was Dad looking like that for? The expression on his face was so sad and puzzling. It filled him with a sort of remorse, so that he got up and went and sat on the arm of his father's chair. From there he could not see his face, and again he saw Fleur—in his mother's hands slim and white on the keys, in the profile of her face and her powdery hair; and down the long room in the open window where the May night walked outside.

When he went up to bed his mother came into his room. She stood at the window and said:

"Those cypresses your grandfather planted down there have done wonderfully. I always think they look beautiful under a dropping moon. I wish you had known your grandfather, Jon."

["TO LET" is continued on page 431.]

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Plain Letters to a Pretty Girl.

By a Bad Man.

Illustrated by A. K. Macdonald.

In this, his second letter to Eve, the writer out of his wickedness gives her much counsel on the occasion of her leaving school. He points out pitfalls for her ineffable little feet, and directs her to wisdom. He knows that she will despise all, but this is not his fault.

Eve, darling, for you to-day the trumpets of the dawn are sounding boot and saddle. You have left school; you have escaped from the house mistress and the games mistress, the literature mistress and the mathematical mistress, from the pedagogic Hittite and Hivite and Amorite and Gergashite and Jebusite, like a bird out of the snare of the fowler.

Mentally, and as regards your personality, you are now in the state of an engine assembled but not run in. It depends on what wise hand controls the throttle and lubrication whether you attain slowly to incredible revs or seize up altogether in the first hundred miles. But, Eve, your design is sound, that is to say physically you are superb, and, as this state of your body re-acts on your mind, you've infinite possibilities.

It's your mind that pre-occupies me. Women have but recently, in the mass,

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One of a man's most charming traits is that he will give away his whole life history . . . to almost any attractive girl who sits and smiles and doesn't ask questions. [*Page* 368, *col.* 1.]

acquired minds of any kind. I doubt if they are the happier for it, because none of the functions for which they were created requires intelligence, these being more or less automatic. Mental exercises absorb vitality, and women require all their vitality in other directions. However, minds are worn nowadays, and this being the case, I want yours to be of the most satisfactory description.

You'd better look on your mind for the present, Eve, as one looks on a growing child. The growing child eats like an ostrich; its diet would paralyse you and me with indigestion, but the growing child laughs and thrives. To feed your growing mind you must observe and observe and always observe. Provide it with an inexhaustible bath of impressions, and let it absorb them like a sponge. It will take no harm, because it rejects naturally what is useless or superfluous, even as the growing child, after excesses at a pastrycook's, goes away quietly by himself, and returns pale, but much better for the crisis.

Mentally, you've led a life among books hitherto. For the present people must be your books. Being a girl, you'll learn most from men, just as a boy learns most from women if he is intelligent, and fools never learn. You should meet as many people as possible of all types. There is one wisdom of a political dinner party and another of a parish tea. You need to develop every side of your mind and learn to use all your weapons. Cultivate particularly your weak points; if you're shy with old ladies, go out of your way to consort with them until old ladies have no terrors for you. If you hate dining out because you never feel at your best, dine out as much as possible. It's the only way to develop character—take your weak points and wring their necks one by one.

The supreme test, especially for you, who are a girl and depend much on social gifts, is to be able to meet a complete stranger, whether a countess or a charlady, a duke or a dustman, and be on happy terms in the fewest possible number of seconds. The only way to do this is to be perfectly simple and natural, an art not acquired in five minutes by anybody.

You can take it as an axiom that people whom you like will like you. If you feel persistently ill at ease with certain individuals it's wise to lay the blame at your own door, not theirs, and make a serious effort to remedy matters. Everyone has some angle in life, hobby, or sideline, discussing which he or she is perfectly happy, and the thing is to discover it and use it. This is a golden key to social success, for if you make people feel happy in your company they can't help liking you. To wish to give a pleasant impression isn't vanity; it's partly good manners, partly kindness of intention.

In your reasonable efforts to be liked, however, you must never go out after men, bu

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make the man go out after you. It's vital to pre-erve your mental independence with men, for they will respect you if you maintain your own outlook on life politely (always supposing you have one to maintain) and not otherwise. "What a lovely day, Mr. Smith!" "Well, Miss Eve, I think it's rather wet." "Yes, Mr. Smith, it *is* wet, isn't it?" is the type of dialogue which is bad both for you and Mr. Smith. It destroys his consideration for you and increases the circumference of his head. That was the sort of thing dished out by Mr. Smith's mother to Mr. Smith Senior, and that's why Mr. Smith Senior is patronising to young women and an overbearing old bore to women of his own age.

You should try to be on good terms with your own sex, because they will be your worst enemies if you cultivate enemies. Another woman will never stand up in battle to you and cleave you to the chine. She prefers the Chinese method of death by the thousand cuts—snicking little bits out of your reputation till it bleeds to death.

Let me implore you to remember always, Eve, dear heart, that it's fatal for a girl to play to the gallery. A girl is at her best the most subtle, pervasive, inescapable creature. Her atmosphere, her soul-essence, or whatever you like to call it, should permeate the thoughts and ambitions and day-dreams and introspections of the man or men whom she desires to attract; and though the majority of men are by no means subtle in a woman's eyes, yet they have an instinctive horror of a blatant girl, seeing that their destiny is that of the hounds, not the hare.

If you pursue a man he won't run away. He won't even walk away. He'll, as

Men, except the sublime few, are apt to fear the obviously intelligent girl.
[*Page* 368, *col.* 1.]

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it were, dematerialise—at one moment he'll be there and the next no trace of his existence will be discoverable even with a microscope. To experience this phenomenon leaves a girl with that lonely, lost feeling. I should like you to avoid it if possible.

Where men are concerned you ought always to be the receptive half of the contract. The idea is to give an impression of amusing them, but in reality lure them to talk. The average man will always talk about himself to a woman on the least provocation for periods of time that almost encroach on eternity.

One of a man's most charming traits is that he will give away his whole life-history, ideals, desires, pursuits, and business generally to almost any attractive girl who sits and smiles and doesn't ask questions. When you are tired, one simple question will usually dam the tide, for questions put a man on his guard, and there's no harm in doing that after you've found out all you want.

Information gained in this fashion should be applied to suit your own ends but never quoted in cold blood. Men hate having their own words used as evidence against them. To say: "But, Mr. Smith, you told me at the Robinsons' dance that you disapproved of careers for women" is a terrible *faux pas*. Mr. Smith will feel that there is a catch in it somewhere, or else he's changed his mind since and feels obliged to live up to his mind before last, which is the sort of irritating thing a woman *would* make him do.

On the whole, nothing much is expected of a young girl. The world at large says of her in effect:

> "As rich and purposeless as is the rose,
> Thy simple doom is to be beautiful.
> Thee God created but to grow, not strive,
> And not to suffer—merely to be sweet."

Granted this attitude, the more knowledge you acquire in secret the greater your success will be now you're out in the world. To know men, women, and books strengthens your personality and increases your power. It's the technique of living, because it enables you to form certain opinions automatically, without thinking, just as you swim or ride a bicycle without thinking. This leaves your mind free for real emergencies. So please, Eve, develop your mind, not for the sake of showing off, but to enable you to conceal the fact that you *are* intelligent. Men, except the sublime few, are apt to fear the obviously intelligent girl. You'll recognise the sublime few soon enough. For one thing, you'll find yourself talking and them listening!

The vital need is for you to sharpen your wits all the time, and the only whetstone for them is someone else's wits. A girl's wits are her chief weapon. You may very well find dozens of other girls just as young, just as pretty, on the surface just as alluring as yourself. But your personality, if you develop it, will let you apply your own gifts so skilfully that the other girls will be left at the post.

You ought to take infinite pains with your clothes, and insist on their expressing *you*. If you dress yourself cunningly, no other girl should be able to wear your clothes without looking an absolute guy. Your frocks must be as individual as your handwriting, so never let your dressmaker have the last word. It isn't so much a question of money as of personality—again and always—for a girl whose clothes express *her* will go further than an expensively-dressed fool. The one is a picture; the other merely advertises a large allowance and the firm who turned her out.

Would you like a little watchword to carry out into the great world, my adventurous Eve? "Be interested in people" is as good a one as I can think of, largely because to be interested is a sign of intelligence. If you don't find people interesting, you must be a fool yourself, for everyone is interesting to an extent, even, at the worst, for his lack of interest. Besides, people are everlastingly grateful to you for your interest, and to win gratitude is not a bad achievement for a young girl.

You see, you must give in order that it shall be given unto you. In ever so many cases you must give first. Sympathy is the best gift, especially from a girl. You might as well be dead as unsympathetic. Even putting the idea on its lowest plane, it pays to give. Greedy people never receive anything that really matters. Perhaps that's why they're so greedy—in a desperate effort to get what will never be theirs.

It's one of the few certainties of life that as you begin, so you'll go on. The first note you strike will be the *motif* of your whole social career, using the word social in its broadest sense—that of companionship. Therefore you can't go too slowly or too carefully at the outset.

You see, you're so adorable that not to have a perfectly wonderful life would be the most hideous crime you could commit. To save you from that crime will ever be the most earnest endeavour of,

Yours most faithfully,

THE SINNER.

(Next month the Bad Man discourses to Eve on the subject of "Men.")

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The Voice in the Night.

By Vivian Drake.

Illustrated by E. S. Hodgson.

•

Barely visible in the dawning light, Sir George Thorney shifted wearily in his office chair and spoke to the American:

"It's been a long night, John."

"Damned long!" John Lamont did not look so much weary as warily calm. Although he was forty-five to the other's sixty, it was not age but the faculty to conserve almost effortlessly the intense vitality of his strong frame by complete physical inanition that kept him fresh; only the keen brain remained alive. . . . It was a talent circumstance had taught him.

"What time did we send that cable?" he asked.

"One"—Sir George shifted a memo-pad into the little circle of light from his desk-lamp—"one-fifteen."

"Six hours; another two ought to give us New York's answer."

"Underwood in charge there, I suppose?" asked Sir George.

"Yes; I haven't found a better man yet. Bob's quick on the trigger right enough, but he's had to do some tall thinking in the last few hours!"

"Quite; some tall thinking, as you say."

Together they sat in silence and watched the shadows of the great office fade as the bleak November Friday dawned. Barely audible beyond the carved oak door came the faint, intermittent tapping of a typewriter; outside, a solitary cart approached with growing clatter, faded away, and left Victoria Street silent again.

The paling circle of the desk light lamp shone on the paper-littered desk dividing the two strong men—Sir George Thorney, the famous international financier, and John Lamont, one of the wealthiest, most successful, and most-feared men in the United States.

Years ago Wall Street had given place to America for his scope, and of late many of his enterprises had been international. Hard, clever, ruthless, he ploughed his way on relentlessly, driving, always driving. The vast deal he now held in process was one of a sequence he had put through in company with Sir George Thorney.

An hour passed by, and Lamont began to show signs of restlessness and spoke rather irritably:

"You know, I like a fight; I've stayed out any man and situation I can remember and been fresher than the others at the end of the session. But I hate this waiting, this——"

"Waiting is always the most trying," said Sir George gravely. "But, ah! here's your Mr. Norton!"

A very tired young man entered the room and laid a sheaf of typewritten papers on the table.

"The whole thing, Mr. Lamont."

"Thanks, Norton. Is Wood still at the cable office? All right. He may return with their answer any time now. Say, suppose you go out and try and get some hot coffee for us all. Are the—er—public-houses open yet in this city, Sir George?"

"Oh, yes; there's a little one at the end of the next street, Mr. Norton. And could you get us some biscuits?"

"Surely, Sir George."

Lamont examined the typewritten papers. "By heavens, we have done a lot of work since midnight!"

"I can well believe it," replied Sir George drily.

"Yes; now let's go over it together. I'll take a carbon copy."

They worked step by step through the intricacies of the gigantic enterprise Lamont's brain had evolved. Time and again he paused to explain the almost diabolically clever outwitting of some part of the adversaries' scheme. Coffee was brought them, they lit cigars, and ploughed on. At last Lamont leant back in his chair,

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"As far as I can see, everything is thought of."

"Everything!" In the short silence Sir George reached out and carefully tipped the ash off his cigar. "'Helpless to control his route,'" he repeated absently. "Your own words, John." His grave eyes met Lamont's keen gaze, and he continued quietly: "John, you've seen, I suppose, in your mind's eye, what it will mean to the people in that great works at Oshona, up in a lonely country, if you do as you expect to do?"

"I have; the factory is way up in a remote part of Maine, and there's no other means of employment. But there is the position. Davidson owns it, he chose to fight *à outrance;* he's lost, and he or I go down in the smash. I'm sorry for the people, but I can't help it."

"They, with their homes and their lives and hopes, are rather helpless in your hands. I was inclined to be rather ruthless myself once—some time ago now. John, you are going to wreck much. Is there *no* other way?"

"No. Oshona's got to go. We want the machinery for our own mills. I asked Davidson to come in with me, but he preferred a fight, and he's getting it."

"He's practically lost now," replied the older man. "But isn't there any compromise? Have these people to be turned adrift in America?"

"I never compromise," said Lamont doggedly. "It's been a hard enough fight, and it's not over yet. If I'd lost——" He threw up his hands.

"But the mill operatives?"

"It's Life, I'm afraid. I tell you, it's been the biggest battle of my career. And I'm going to win, completely!"

"Yes, I suppose so," returned Sir George s'owly. In the ensuing pause Norton hurried in:

"Wood's coming up the stairs, sir!"

Lamont sat up eagerly. A man ran into the room and handed a telegram to him. He motioned the two assistants out of the office and opened the envelope hastily. He conned over the message rapidly and tossed it to his colleague.

"Hell! I wondered if Davidson would try that. He's quick, by God, he's quick. Now then——"

He sat thinking, changing front to meet a shrewd blow from the enemy. The fighting spirit surged up in him in waves that were almost visible. Sir George Thorney sat with his lips pursed into a little soundless whistle. Backwards and forwards over the complexity of the situation Lamont's brilliant brain strove to define his exact plan. A few minutes sufficed.

"He's clever—oh, infernally clever! But not quite enough. We still get him; I see the way."

"Yes?" asked the other tensely.

"Time is priceless. We must act now. The first thing is to start on Oshona. I'll settle Davidson myself on the spot. Norton!"

He dictated the clear, incisive cable of orders that was to let fall the sledgehammer stroke at the great factory, and turned back to Sir George.

"I must leave for New York *at once.* Is your shipping man here? It's nine-thirty!"

Sir George pressed one of a row of buttons. "Gordon will know. Ah, Gordon, Mr. Lamont wants to leave for America immediately — to-day, if possible. What ships are there?"

The wise old man shook his head. "The first ship out is the *Baltic*, on Tuesday, sir," he announced. "Then the *Mauretania*, on Thursday."

"*Baltic's* an eight-day boat, isn't she?" snapped Lamont.

"Yes, sir. They both reach New York on the twelfth, unless they're delayed."

"Oh, *damn!*"

"Too late, John?"

"I think so." There was a short silence. Suddenly Gordon stepped forward excitedly and spoke to his chief.

"Just a minute, sir. I've an idea. A moment, please!" He ran out, and in a minute came rushing back with a paper.

"Our *Varonia* clears for New York to-day, Sir George, Royal Albert Dock, noon, Captain Dougal."

"One of the Clyde boats—we control the Line," explained Sir George to the anxious Lamont. "Mr. Lamont could be signed on as one of the officers, I fancy?" he asked Gordon swiftly.

"It could be done, sir. But the time—Mr. Lamont can't catch her in an hour and a half!"

"Why not?" demanded Lamont explosively. "And can't she be held?"

"No, sir. The tide is full at eleven-thirty, and she is ten days delayed now! And there's your passport visa, and the papers, and your luggage——"

Lamont vibrated with action; it was a situation after his own heart, and swiftly, unhurriedly, he made his decisions:

"Never mind the visa; I'll fix that. And the luggage. How long does the ship take?"

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"Twelve days at most, sir. She will be in two days ahead of the *Mauretania*."

"That settles it," said Lamont. "Two days mean much. And if I went on the big ship everyone would know I was coming. Sir George, *I must make that ship!* I must be there to counter Davidson personally. If I am not——"

Sir George made up his mind rapidly and gave his directions to old Gordon:

"Ring up the Clyde Line's Marine Superintendent at the Docks and tell him Mr. Lamont goes on the ship as fourth officer, and that he is to have the necessary papers ready on the ship. Tell him to meet Mr. Lamont at Central Station, and to send a message to the Captain. Get me the Port Aliens Officer on the telephone at once—— quick!"

Lamont was already calling his secretary. "Norman, I'm going to sail for New York in an hour's time. Speed like the devil to the Ritz, get my suit-case and trunk, throw in my clothes—see my passport's in the suit-case—tell the manager I'm called away into the country for the week-end—don't say I've gone home—meet me at—— What's the station, Sir George?"

"Fenchurch Street."

"Fenchurch Street Station. Rush now, like——"

Norton had already gone. Sir George was explaining matters over the telephone to the Aliens Officer. His name carried weight with that worthy, and formalities rapidly gave place to action. Immediately he finished Lamont proffered him his hat:

"Come with me to the station and I'll tell you the plan of action. Come on; it's gone ten-forty-five."

Together they captured a cab, and the driver, dazed with a five-pound note, broke every traffic law of the city. They tore along the Embankment at mad speed, but arrived at the Bank of England crossing behind a solid block of traffic. Minutes ticked on, and the strain became unbearable. Slowly the stream moved on; tortuously they wove their way through Fenchurch Street, and finally swerved into the station-yard. Lamont jumped out and ran to the ticket office.

"When's the next train to the Royal Albert Docks?" he demanded.

"Eleven-twenty," returned the official imperturbably.

"When's it get to Central Station?"

"Eleven-forty-six," came the answer.

Lamont turned to Sir George. "It's eleven-five now, and nothing can get me there sooner. Can I get from the train to the boat in fourteen minutes?"

"Um—yes, if you run."

"Norton ought to be here within a few minutes; let's walk up the platform. How big is the *Varonia?*"

"Seven thousand tons, if I remember. Built two years ago; good boat for a cargo ship."

"Good Heavens, seven thousand! And the last ship I came over in was forty-six thousand. Well, it will be a new experience for me." He strode up to the guard and pressed two pounds into that astonished official's hand, with an admonition to get the train in ahead of time.

The guard nodded, as if humouring a madman. "Orl right, sir; I'll try me 'and."

Norton came bustling up the platform, shepherding a panting porter.

"Good for you, Norton. Everything's working out like a clock. Now then, got any paper and pencil? Take down this——" He finished dictating a fresh cablegram, and shook hands with Sir George Thorney as the train began to move.

The ensuing twenty-five minutes were the most trying he ever remembered. Great happenings hung on his catching the steamer, he had been at great tension for thirty hours without a rest; he was strung to breaking-point, yet the shabby little local train pottered along through the slums of East London, stopping religiously at each dirty station, maddeningly deliberate, stolidly indifferent to his affairs. Once it came slowly to a standstill between stations, and he could have almost yelled with impatience. Then on again past the monotonous vista of filthy back windows, rags of clothes hung out to dry, grimy streets lined with coster barrows, damp in a fine drizzle. They began to crawl down the great docks, and after an eternity jerked to a standstill at the depressing little wooden Central Station. He leapt out and turned back to where the faithful guard was already pitching out his luggage.

A fat, pompous station-master bore slowly down on him. Lamont spoke to him with words clipped to machine-gun speed:

"Two porters at once and a truck to take these to the *Varonia*." An inspiration seized him. "Quick, please—no questions—*On His Majesty's Service!*"

The station-master, electrified by the magic lie, swallowed a protest against his porters leaving the station, and bawled for them. A brisk, thin man with pointed beard bustled up.

"Mr. Lamont? I'm the Marine Superintendent. You'll have to hurry up." They urged the porters along the merchandise-piled quays. Lamont ran ahead, brushing

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The Captain was standing just to leeward of the wheelhouse in the centre of the bridge . . . gazing enigmatically ahead into the heavy weather.

[*Page* 374, *col.* 1.]

aside any in his path with characteristic ruthlessness. He caught sight of a red funnel over the roof of a shed. "That her?" he panted, and the Superintendent nodded. To Lamont the funnel seemed to be moving.

A party of grimy dockhands were just loosening the gangway ropes as he raced up it, the main shore ropes were cast off, and two tugs fussed about close to the ship. The Captain stood at the rail, and shook hands with him as he stepped on board.

"Where's your baggage?" he inquired briefly. Lamont pointed to the porters struggling to the ship. As his trunk was hoisted inboard the Captain raised his hand to the Chief Officer on the bridge.

"Ca-st a-w-a-y!" The Chief Officer's order floated back to them.

"Papers," said the Marine Superintendent succinctly. They went below. Ten minutes later Lamont watched the brisk little man taken off by a rowboat outside the dock gates. Then reaction got him, and hours later the saloon steward found him sprawled like a

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dead man on the hard settee in the smelly little saloon, in the deep sleep of utter exhaustion. But he had won his rubber of the game first.

During the next two days, while they stole down the crowded river, threaded their way through the sandbank mazes of Dover, and on past England until the lonely, gaunt pile of Bishop's Rock drew aft as they passed on to the grim, grey expanse of the open sea, his brain swung slowly down to the life about him, except for one fast spell, when the wireless operator was kept busy for hours. The plans he laid were complete to the last detail possible at the time, and he reluctantly settled down to wait.

He had long talks with the Captain and the Chief Engineer, trying to infuse into them his vital, driving spirit, and they met him with vague explanations of the Great Circle route and Speed Efficiency. In both their English souls they thought him a little mad. Finally, when the ship drew out of touch with Poldhu, he temporarily threw the whole affair from his shoulders and plunged into the affairs of the ship with an almost boyish eagerness that made him lovable when he cared.

He liked the square, tough old Captain, with his thousand-and-one yarns of the sea and ships and women, set in many a strange setting, told as they stood together on the bridge, and the muscular young Second Officer, rather reserved for the first day or so; and a certain foul-mouthed old sailor who talked clandestinely to him of a morning aft number three hatchway, and punctuated his conversation with squirts of vile tobacco juice.

"Ye've not been across in a ship as small as this before, Mr. Lamont?" queried the Captain as they paced up and down the bridge one morning.

"No, Captain, I haven't; though I've been round about the Caribbean a little in my boat, the *Cynthia*."

"Eh. An' how big might she be? Steam?"

"Yes. Just a thousand tons."

"Ye're quite a seaman, then?"

"No," laughed Lamont, "only a fool amateur!"

"We-ll. It's a long apprenticeship, the sea."

They were rolling easily to the swell from a big blow way down in the Bay of Biscay, and the ship was forging ahead at a steady twelve knots.

"Fine weather," ventured Lamont,

"Aye . . to-day!"

All around them, always, hidden, mayhap, but ever present, was the threat of the great November gales, of North Atlantic winter weather, the most dangerous sea in the world.

He ate his meals with the officers in the tiny saloon that was drenched with the implacable odour of hundreds of overcooked Finnan haddie. In the dark of the long November evenings he played cards with the officers not on watch, or yarned, or entered the wireless cabin and put on the receivers for an hour or so. He had learnt wireless during a rather lengthy cruise on his own yacht, when he was supposed to be recovering from a mental breakdown, back in the clutter of his earlier achievements. Now, prompted as to the ways of the ship's equipment, it came back tolerably to him.

He kept the evening watch from eight to twelve with the Second Officer, propped up against the bridge-rail, or pacing up and down the narrow strip, gazing ahead as they drove on under the brilliant stars or lowering clouds, talking of many ports and many things around the world. The Second Officer had become more communicative. They discussed the relative merits of land and sea.

"Yes," said the Second. He was a square-jawed, iron-framed young man. "But I don't think that it's such a steady profession as you think, sir. Look at me; I'm thirty, and I've been at sea fifteen years; but supposing I make one mistake—just one error of judgment—I'm finished, whether it's on a small craft like this or on the bridge of a big ship with three thousand souls under me. There's no second chance, and I'd never be given another job. And I've a wife and two children."

The Second sucked his pipe and meditated on the decency of asking the ship's passenger as to what on earth could be urgent enough to bring him to twelve long days and nights of cramped, uncomfortable life in place of the majestic luxury of a great liner. Meantime the Stranger within the Gate sucked his own pipe and let his mind drift from London to Oshona, from Oshona to New York, and back again. "You've more certainty than some," he answered at last.

Day succeeded day, and it was not until the sixth that they began to experience heavy weather. Minor blows had come and gone, but as they began to draw nearer to the Grand Banks, down from the lonely Cape Race, a thousand wild miles to the Northwest, the breeding-place of the most fiendish gales in the world, came a short, vicious swell, threateningly, and a steadily rising wind that whipped the white spray off the rollers into the foredeck like sleet. All day it gathered strength, and when Lamont

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turned in he found that the steward had triced up his trunk to the cabin wall.

He grimaced at the unpleasant situation and thought of the falling barometer. They were still six days from port, right in mid-ocean. He lay awake a long time, braced in his bunk to the ship's roll, listening to the dull, thunderous hammer-blows of the seas striking the ship and making her shudder and vibrate in her roll.

When he got up the next morning he could scarcely stand for the violence of the ship's motion. Hastily dressing and breakfasting, he put on oilskins and climbed up on to the bridge into a savage world.

A high, heavy, dangerous sea crashed down in an endless fury from the sullen infinity of the North-West, and the ship was labouring heavily; all he could see under the lowering, torn grey sky was a mass of mountainous black rollers charging relentlessly from horizon to horizon, their crests torn into a wild fury by the storm; all he could hear was the high-pitched whine of the gale through the rigging, falling as the ship rolled to leeward and rising as she rolled back to weather, but unceasing and menacing.

Very rarely the racing clouds tore apart for a brief second and let through a strange, lonely beam of sunlight. Life-lines were rigged fore and aft along the decks, but no man could venture forward of the bridge supports. Every minute or so the ship's heavy roll was stopped with a jerk and a tremendous blow, as a great sea dashed against the starboard bow and broke with a roar and a flurry of spray over the foredeck. Storms of sleet and the constant sheets of spray drenched the bridge, and it was bitterly cold.

The Captain was standing just to leeward of the wheelhouse in the centre of the bridge, braced sturdily to the ship's action, gazing enigmatically ahead into the heavy weather from under his peaked cap. He grinned cheerfully at Lamont.

"How d'ye like North Atlantic winter weather now?" he shouted.

Lamont grimaced, and swore as a shower of spray dashed in his face. Standing there and watching the heavy punishment she was taking, he still felt a comforting confidence in the ship—she was only two years old, built in a famous ship-yard. He also had confidence in the hard-bitten, casual-looking, steely-eyed old Captain, who watched so constantly.

His spirits rose, and he began to thrill with exultation at the fierce, mad weather, and a certain cold joy grew in him at its magnificent strength pitted against their own cunning and strength and indomitable wills.

He saw the enemy Davidson in each grey monster that threatened, only to be cut and flung aside by the invincible steel bows, and gloried in the triumph.

"The old cow is rolling through seventy degrees on the clinometer—thirty-five each way!" volunteered the Captain.

Lamont nodded and sought relief in the wheelhouse. He glanced at the log-book lying open on the shelf and read the entry of the Officer of the Watch. "Full gale. Vessel rolling and pitching heavily, shipping water fore and aft." ran the terse language of the sea.

"Shipping water fore and aft," he repeated ironically, as he watched the fo'castle head disappear under thirty tons or so of solid Atlantic. He grasped the Second's arm to steady himself. "All of that!"

His support smiled faintly.

With the exception of six hours in his bunk, he spent the next twenty-four hours on the bridge, whilst the weather steadily got worse. Late afternoon of the third day of the gale found it at its worst; the barometer was down out of sight, the wind was an endless scream, and the raging sea hammered at them with a species of terrible patience, hour after hour, hour after hour. The Captain had become monosyllabic and was constantly off and on the bridge. They were making a bare three knots ahead instead of twelve, and Lamont's muscles ached with bracing himself to the ship's reel and tumble.

Night began to close down on them, heavy and foreboding. Always the great seas tore down, surged round and half over them, and swept on to the darkening horizon to make way for more. Not exultant, but weary, uneasy, and filled with a grotesque loneliness, while they struggled, solitary and impotent, in the great raging waste with no other sail to share their solitude, Lamont watched. The dusk deepened, and seven o'clock found them enveloped in inky blackness.

Lamont never forgot the scene. As he stood on the port side of the bridge he could just see into the wheelhouse, where the helmsman, his hands on the wheel and his face half-lit by the sombre rays from the binnacle lamp in the compass, watched the swinging card and tried to hold the ship to her course; outside, a faint reflection touching the back of his glistening oilskin, stood the Officer of the Watch, ceaselessly gazing ahead; overhead and slightly forward, the foremast light threw a pale gleam over a few yards of the vibrating shrouds.

It was deadly cold, with the sea spray

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striking like ice; and presently, feeling indescribably weary and impotent, he left the bridge and fought his way round the weather side of the ship, and entered the wireless cabin.

"Hullo, Mr. Lamont, coming in to get warm?" cried the young Wireless Officer. "It's a filthy night."

"It is that, exactly," growled Lamont, as he took off his dripping coat and moved over to the steam pipe. He thawed out for a few minutes, and then asked:

"Any news?"

"No, just the general jabber. I picked up Cape Race about four o'clock. Like to take 'em, sir?" He took off the head receivers and held them out.

"Thanks!" said Lamont as he adjusted them on his head and sat down at the instrument table, welcoming a little distraction. For half-an-hour he sat and listened to the jumble of tiny little noises, mostly blurred and unreadable through distance, of ships talking to each other over the face of the waters; every now and again the clear, powerful note of one of the high-power stations cut through them all. Cape Race was talking to a great liner five hundred miles to the South of them, and the steady, booming note of the Transatlantic station at New Jersey talking to Ireland accompanied the conversation.

"Filthy night," repeated the young officer succinctly.

"D'you get this all the time in winter?" queried Lamont.

"Mostly, yes. Lord, you should have been with us last trip——" he launched into narrative. "Dam' funny," he concluded. "The Chief Officer's whisky literally made the cat tight after the bottles were broken. We took it up to the Skipper and it rolled on his floor. Then——"

"Yes?" said Lamont, grinning.

"It was beastly sick, and the Skipper's steward swore that——"

Suddenly Lamont stiffened to rigidity and stared for a moment at the boy's face with unseeing eyes. Then he turned swiftly in his chair and his hand shot out to the tuning key. Amid the little whispering grumble of sounds drifting down into the warm cabin his ears caught Something. Something.

Carefully, while the Wireless Officer, magnetised, crouched half in and half out of his chair, he tuned into the faintly-heard message. Then he heard it; heard the gaunt, dreaded message of the Sea faintly sound into his strained ears.

"*Did-did-did—Da-da-da—did-did-did.*"

"*S.O.S.*"

From far out on the lonely, murderous sea came the little message of Death! "*Save our souls!*" Then she made her number and position, repeating it carefully several times.

"2214—got the Register?" he snapped to the Wireless Officer. The latter was already opening the International Wireless Shipping Register.

"2214—Yes—the *Po estar*—New York—8:00 tons—American-owned—nine officers and fifty-five crew," said the Wireless Officer swiftly. Lamont pencilled down the name and the latitude and longitude, and handed the slip of paper to the other.

"Will you take this up to the Captain?" he asked abruptly, and then turned back to the tuning key and listened again for the plaintive cry that spelt deadly peril and a ship's agony. After a little pause he picked it up again: "*S.O.S. S.O.S. S.O.S.*" Cape Race had caught the cry and commenced to repeat it with great rushes of its powerful signals:

"*All ships alter course to S.O.S. lat. xxx long. xxx . . . S.O.S. . . . all ships alter course to——*"

The gigantic liner to the Southward acknowledged, made her position, and a brief exchange of messages took place. The liner was too far away to be of any help. Several faint inquiries chimed in with their chattering, murmuring Morse and trickled through into the receivers in the silent cabin. Through it all there kept on the steady, beating call from the *Polestar*:

"*S.O.S. S.O.S. S.O.S.*"

The Wireless Officer was tumbling into the cabin again with a slip of paper. Lamont read it quickly:

"*Polestar's* position two hundred miles W. 85° N. Have altered course. Making maximum headway five knots. Transmit.
H. DOUGAL, Master."

Lamont immediately threw over the switch for the emergency power and started to transmit to Cape Race, while the little room reverberated with the crashing stutter of the spark. After a pause Cape Race acknowledged. For an hour all remained confused, and then the situation began to clear.

The big liner was too far away to be of any possible help. There were no other ships in front of them or as near the *Polestar*. Cape Race tapped on—*Varonia* was the nearest to the stricken ship and the only one which might save her.

For the first time the *Polestar* began describing her condition:

"*List of sixty degrees and pitching heavily. Only one fire burning—engines stopping.*"

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ran the first pitiful message. A long pause intervened, while Lamont thought of the sixty-four souls fighting for their lives alone—so alone.

"*All boats smashed—engines ceased—fear sinking*," was the next signal, an hour later.

Lamont looked up haggardly and eased the head-receivers from his ears.

"Two hundred miles at five knots! My God!" The young Wireless Operator, white-faced, watched him without replying. Only the dull drone of the power-dynamo and an occasional splatter of spray outside broke the stillness of the little cabin.

Then he leant forward again and listened patiently. From time to time he sent messages up to the bridge, and heard the roar of the storm outside as the Wireless Officer opened and shut the stout door. Hour after hour he sat facing the array of shining brass knobs and switches. There was silence from all but the *Polestar*. Cape Race was waiting, listening, hoping, just as he was. A ship in distress, sinking, on this wild night, far from even the cruel, savage rocks of Cape Race. He raged at the helplessness of everything. There was nothing—nothing—that could be done. The stricken ship was helpless. he was helpless, and yet nothing could be done. His eyes stared dully at the ampèrage dial while his brain raced on, past the immediate, past the storm, into strange new corridors lit with glaringly brilliant lights. Once the *Polestar* made another short message:

"*Am sinking.*"

Her current was getting weak and he had difficulty to tune in to her signal. Hopelessly, but unwilling to give in, praying that another ship might be nearer to her, her operator continued the code: "*Save our souls!*" The night passed on. Lamont ceased to send messages.

All through the long night he kept his vigil, feeling as he had never felt before, while he listened to the call of sixty odd souls for Life.

About half-past three her call suddenly increased in speed. Lamont's perception strung together even more tensely. Everything piled together into a swift pyramid of action. Minutes raced by and the world seemed to spin. A heavy glass water-bottle broke away from its beckets and crashed to the floor with a deafening report. He felt a singing in his ears, through which streamed a sudden message:

"*Sinking. Taking to rafts. Going——*" Then, faint but very fast:

"*S.O.S.! S.O.—— !*"

The tiny sound snapped like a thread.

He slowly took off the head-receivers, mechanically switched off the main power, and, as if dazed, pencilled down the time. Under the brilliant electric light everything was deadly silent. He got up abruptly, hatless and coatless, and went to the door. He had to brace both feet to the floor and force it open with his shoulder. It smashed to behind him, and he was confronted by the tremendous contrast of the raging hell around them.

He clawed his way up the ladder on to the weather side of the bridge, fought his way up to the end, and crouched behind the threshing canvas dodger overhanging the hungry fury beneath.

He had a continual vision of savage white crests racing past him almost level, and high above him as the ship rolled. Clinging on to the weather-rail, alone, unable to see even the helmsman, out of hail of any human being, the icy salt water running from him, he groped for the meaning of it all.

It came, slowly. He had cursed at the living fury before him, cursed at the grim tragedy played two hundred miles away on its lonely stage. *Rafts!* Ten minutes, Fifteen, perhaps. No single gleam to light them on their long way, no friend standing by, nothing but the infinity of tossing solitude and the numbing cold. He stopped once because he found himself pounding the rail with his clenched fist and shouting to God at the uselessness of it all.

It was so much Life. He would not have minded dying himself. He was now indifferent to the danger of the seas. He would have gone down fighting, fighting hard. It was not that. He had had to watch the slow, merciless crushing of a little community, heedless of its brave defence, and the new sight revolted him. Slowly the conviction bore itself on him: "*Life—yours to alter—yours to alter——*"

It lifted him up. He saw the ship, and the sea, and his motionless body crouching on the end of the bridge, like a distinct picture from a distance. Resolution began to grow, not quickly but painfully, lit in the strong light of something new. Two hours he remained, searching his strong soul, until a single gleam shot up out of the darkness aft, the Eastern promise of Day.

Then he turned, climbed swiftly down from the bridge, and wrenched his way into the wireless-cabin again. The young operator was lying in his bunk, his white face exhausted as he slept. Lamont sat down at the mahogany polished table of keys and dials. For a while he sat immobile, his keen face set and strained, mutely questioning the silence round him.

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Lamont immediately threw over the switch for the emergency power, and started to transmit to Cape Race. [*Page 375, col. 2.*]

Then quickly he threw in the switch for the emergency dynamo; its powerful note gathered volume. His strong brown fingers seized the sending key, hesitated a second, and then the great blue spark crashed out and leapt between the terminals as he called Cape Race and spelt out his message:

"*Lamontco*
New York.

"*Cancel absolutely previous order to close Oshona* stop *All operatives to be retained* stop *Lamont.*"

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The Wild Lad From Wigan.

By Christine Jope-Slade.

Illustrated by Charles Crombie.

I.

FEBRUARY sunshine, silvery and fleeting, flashing out of the leaden skies, peeping puckishly like youth in the face of age—no warmth in it, nothing to lessen the penetrating cold.

Tea—tea and hot scones. Not far to Harridge's. Lovely tea at Harridge's. What was the good? Eight shillings and ninepence in the world, and two shillings of that owing for washing. Job? Jolly old chance you stood of getting a job these days.

Out of the corner of her eyes she stole a look at the young man on the seat beside her. She had not sold gardenias and malmaisons for the buttonholes of the rich in Knightsbridge for two years without recognising him as the worst imitation of a West End knut she had ever seen. He was one great scream from suède brogues to greeny-grey Homburg. He was a sartorial satire.

Most of her life she had seen wickedness, and chosen goodness, selecting it voluntarily, knowing it to produce only loneliness, cheap bed-sitting rooms and imitation silk stockings. For five years of business career she had gone home at six-fifteen to purity and tinned food, but she had never been out of work before, and never actually hungry.

"'S cold," she threw at him.

She was not so much affrighted as perplexed; in the still nuns' garden of her mind rigid lilies planted in granite suddenly swayed.

He turned and saw her for the first time.

"What a hell of a hole London is!" he said.

"It isn't all parks." she submitted.

A transient gleam of silvery light sped rapidly over the sodden grass and the few drearily dancing snowdrops.

"It's all hell."

"Why don't you go home?"

"How d'you know this isn't my home?"

"You shouldn't have a map sticking out of your pocket."

"Damn!" said the young man.

He was stocky and bull-necked, awfully clean, with his hair cut too short; an uncouth mixture of pugnacity and extreme timidity.

"I've been sent up to Town to see life."

She considered this.

"You don't see it in London parks in the winter time. Try a cinema."

"I've bought expensive tickets to exclusive places, and sat in a corner and felt like dirt. I've been to bad places and felt like a curate. I can't get in with anyone—not even them, *those* sort of women, you know."

Coolly she appraised him.

"You're all wrong, you know, everything; your shirt, your tie—everything."

Shamed, she withdrew into the nuns' garden she had made of her mind, and saw that the lilies were trampled and hoofed into the earth. Perhaps they had been just an artificial barrier shutting out life. She felt the winds of it blowing on her now—oddly exhilarating and stimulating.

"You know a bit," he challenged bitterly.

Her hair was reddish; she blew a strand out of her eye.

"The second row of the chorus don't dance every night with their eyes in pinafores. What do you think?" she laughed.

He moved up the seat suddenly, setting her inexperienced heart beating with alarm.

"Oh!" he said, staring at her with thickly fringed, boyish grey eyes. "So you're one of *them!*"

There was no freemasonry in his voice; his expression was that of a tourist who discovers the first edelweiss, a timorous experimentalist.

"One of *them!*" he repeated.

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II.

Queer how the hot tea, the hot air, the hot scent of bath salts and face powders and warm, perfumed peltry, even the hot glow of *rose du Barri* bowls filled with snowdrops, and *rose du Barri* shades, tended to intoxicate. She became possessed with a high-spirited, unrecking carelessness of all she said and did. Her past with its conscious, careful goodness became nebulous; she was one big craning forward.

"These fellows you see dancing everywhere—Savoy, Rector's, everywhere—they've no backbone," he was saying.

Her long and splendid eyelashes made black fans on her cheeks while she studied the cakes with the attention of one who had not eaten since breakfast.

"The girls have. You can see 'em!"

Ferociously he scowled at her. "I've been sent up from Wigan to see life, to go the pace, to go on the loose, to muck around. And I don't know how. That's God's honest truth. 'See life before you settle down, lad,' —that's the pater's way. I wrote and told him I'd picked a winner and was having a great time. He sent me another five hundred pounds. The sight of it sent me into a sweat. 'Go off the deep end!' Where *is* the deep end? I can't find it. Oh! you think I'm soppy—you! I like decent women —they turn me, all these; I can't stick 'em."

"Of course you're new rich?"

"Three years."

"Munitions?"

"Rubber tyres and things. It's slackening now."

"What have you done all your life?"

"Work, work like hell. I liked it."

Down came that delicious, shadowy fan of her eyelashes; behind them she considered him, visualised him, his immaturity, his bristling pugnacity, his obstinate rawness; above all, his honesty, leaping at one shiningly like a sword drawn challengingly from its scabbard.

"Have you got a mother?"

"Aye."

"What's she think about it?"

"She thinks I'm seeing high life, having the corners rubbed off. Father married when he was nineteen and he's lived in Wigan all his life—except for Blackpool once a year. Next year they're going to Paris—God help 'em! They think I'm sowing my wild oats and by and by I'll go back, all smartened up and knowing a bit, and settle down and have children and put 'em in the business. They think the gay life up here is all fun, pretty girls, pretty clothes, and all that. I've got the brass, but I'm an outcast."

"I've got the brass!" That beat in her brain like a gong, an invitation from the cold, the semi-starvation, the fear of the slow, inevitable dwindling of the eight-and-ninepence.

She clenched her hands in her lap; her courage, born of desperation, rose above the sickening beating of her heart. Her face seemed to glimmer at him with the pale, cold purity of the snowdrops at her elbow; only her eyes, unfathomable between her thick lashes, held unmistakable invitation.

"How'll I do for the winner?" she drawled.

She seemed to hover above herself, palpitating with fearful fascination, and admire her own mimicry. Hundreds of times she had seen that look, flashing suddenly in eyes in the street, deliberately lit by real ladies in the little shop where she had served exotic blooms.

"You're not smart," he said, scarlet, cornered, glowering at her.

"I've been resting for several months. You don't get smart resting." Casually she reached for another cake. "How they dare charge fivepence each for these I don't know —they're easy as easy to make. I could toss 'em up any time." Her eyes had a wistful eagerness.

"I've got to link up," he said. "Dad's coming to town. I don't want him to think me a soft fool. See here! I prefer to keep myself to myself. I want a smart bit of fluff to tag round with—theatres, dances, all that. Get me?"

"I get you." She was examining the tablecloth, white snowdrops embroidered on *rose du Barri* linen. "Dinky! Wouldn't it be nice for a dressing-table cover?"

He paid the bill and jerked to his feet.

"Come on!" Out in the windy street he asked her what she had been in.

"*The Pearl Princess* and *The Daffydowndilly*," she lied laconically.

"You'd better get clothes. See here, you've got to look a high-stepper. You've got to please my Dad!"

"I've never failed," she told him, suddenly sick.

Clasping, trembling, crisp notes in icy fingers, she gave him her address.

"No—no coming in!"

"Huh! d'you think I want to girl? Make a show—make a show for the old man, that's all." Thick-set, bristling, grotesque in his expressive clothes yet somewhat vital, almost challenging, he glowered down at her. "I'm

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not a woman's man. I never want to be." He turned on his heel and left her.

Oh! the lash of the wind through a cheap merino petticoat. Everything so clear and cold, the lights burning like fires on a frosty night, with a sort of incandescent purity. She passed shops full of the colourful lure of garments, windows heaped with barbaric cushions like mammoth jewels, floral emporia that, looking in from the frosty night, presented the luxuriant opulence of crowded hothouses, windows coldly aglitter with jewels.

Outside a hardware shop she stopped, irresistibly drawn.

There was a great display of glass cooking vessels in the window, cake tins, *casseroles*, pie-dishes, pyramids of gleaming glass.

For ever so long she stood entranced.

She went in, and came out with two parcels and a smiling face of joy.

III.

He sat on the stairs. They were dark stairs and dirty; up them and down them floated the odour of dustbins and cabbage.

He lighted a cigarette. Every now and then he stole a look at the door; beside the bell on a little strip of paper was carefully printed "Prudence Green." He chuckled sardonically.

The door opened and the girl came out.

In the feeble light filtering up and down the stairs and the light from her own rooms she stood there for his inspection.

She wore a wild, untidy whirl of amber cock's feathers on her reddish hair, and a black and amber striped frock; round her neck was a tremendous black satin stock. Her lips were brighter than poppies.

"Do?"

"Dad's not here. I'm not going out with a dress rehearsal. Go and take them off." He paused. "And take that muck off your mouth."

Later she came to him tamely and drabbily, with veiled wonderment in the eyes that hid behind the long lashes.

"I wouldn't have come if I hadn't been so darn' lonely."

"Where shall we go?" she countered.

"Somewhere fresh."

"Have you been to the Zoo?"

"No."

"We'll buy bananas and a tin of golden syrup."

"What for?"

"The monkeys and the bears, you silly!"

He followed her, brows and emotions knit, down the stairs; she had revolutionised all his pet theories.

He left his boorishness in the turnstile, and she her sophistication; they carried the minds and the laughter of children from cage to cage and den to den. In the crisp, gold sunshine last year's leaves gleamed with the brilliance of just fallen foliage; the birds sang spurious spring songs.

On the stairs again, he said to her:

"You're a damn' fine actress. One would think you had enjoyed it."

Her hand in violent contact with his cheek startled him—it called his attention to another ache, not physical, and indefinable, that continued long after his cheek had ceased to smart.

IV.

"You don't pay old Mother Muck's rent in advance for six months and have the white-washer in for nothing, Prudence Green! Don't you think you can come it over me. What you got there? White baize cloth!"

The door across the little passage had opened as she crept upstairs; it had been ajar. The challenger was henna'd, hectic, a faded pink bathgown drawn negligently across a Junoesque bust.

"I'm re-decorating."

"Ye-s-s. I saw you go out the other night—re-decorated to the ceiling you was. What's the game? Can't you let us in?"

"Gwen—they think I'm a bad lot. Let them. Don't spoil things."

"Go'n!" Fat laughter cackled upstairs and downstairs. "That's rich! Rich!"

"Don't spoil things. I've got my room so nice."

"I'll bet you have, sweetie."

The fat girl pushed past into Prudence Green's two rooms.

"All right for a cooking school—but it ain't my idea of a boudoir, dearie." She sat down, drew a single cigarette from the pocket of her bathgown, reached for Prudence's matches, and lit it. Her arms were very beautiful, heavily, duskily white like the petals of a camellia. "That's my last, and there isn't a drain or a crumb of anything in the flat. Tell us about it."

"The wild lad from Wigan," she murmured later bending forward, her fat, uncorseted sides shaking with laughter. "You've got a nerve, Prue, keeping two men running; it amounts to bigamy these days." She paused. "I could do with a meal and a show to-night. I'll take on father or son. I'm not particular."

"Oh no!"

"If not I'll give the show away. I'll tell them they've got hold of the soppiest little nun!"

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The door opened and the girl came out. . . , She wore a wild, untidy whirl of amber cocks' feathers on her reddish hair, and a black and amber striped frock.

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"He wants his father to think——"

"Oh! That's the way the land lies. All right, I'll take on Papa. Cutting a dash with Prudence Green! Poor worms, they might as well go an' eat currant buns with the curate. I'll show 'em a few!"

The blare of a band and the blare of Gwen's laughter, a Gwen fixedly moulded by corsets.

The old man with a red silk handkerchief in his pocket laughing too, never bending, rigid in his personal puritanism, but yielding where his son was concerned; beaming, absorbing mentally and physically large, stale breaths of the thing presented to him as the fast and fashionable life.

"Where the devil did you get hold of that tank, Prue?" whispered the boy.

"Tank?"

"Her."

"You said bring along a pal if I liked."

The old man was talking to the fat girl. "I wanted the boy to have his fling. Sow wild oats and they're sown—leave 'em unsown and they're always in your pocket and the longer they're left the longer and fatter the crop. I married when I was nineteen—and I've had yearnings. Yearnings show a man's full-blooded; yielding to 'em after he's thirty show he's weak-brained. I married a good old girl. Not many of her sort about now. Lancashire and Mother are all right for me—but the boy's different. I like to see him going the pace. Wouldn't do for Mother to see Prue's get up, but I like it, I like it. It's fine."

"So that," said the lad from Wigan, "is your idea of a pal."

She said abruptly: "I'd like to see your mother."

"Huh!" he scoffed. "Mother and you! I don't think!"

"I bet she's a lovely cook," she ventured wistfully.

"You don't bet about my mother."

Midnight.

A sudden ugly cascade of voices quarrelling in the block of buildings opposite, the growling love-song of a cat rising hideously, a streak of moonlight on the blue linoleum, like skimmed milk.

Prue Green sobbing on the bed that was a chair by day, rising by-and-by, red-eyed, lips downdrawn, switching on the electric light in its new blue and white check shade; worshipping at a new gas stove with taps that winked like gold, blinking in sheer, tired ecstasy at a white shelf filled with glass cooking-dishes, stroking with bare pink toes the new blue linoleum.

"Oh, I'd like his mother to see it! I'd like his mother to see it all."

V.

"So I'm not to see your mother?"

"What's the good, Prudence?" The boy was white, miserable—his chin down on the tie she had chosen for him.

"A little cheque——"

Round she flared on the old man. "Little cheque be damned! Haven't you talked enough about 'Mother,' her cooking—what a manager she is—everything. I want her to see how I manage."

Father and son stared at each other; then the old man said: "We don't matter, Prudence Green—a man's different; but Mother——"

"I shan't eat her, or shock her. You don't understand. I haven't a woman I could show my home to, I won't ever have, except your mother. I don't know any woman except Gwen."

"Gwen!" The boy froze on to that. "Now suppose *she* met Mother."

"I'd shoot her first."

Down came the shadowy fan of her lashes; diamonds slid from under them.

"I wanted a real, homey woman to see it, one who's done her own washing and made lovely cakes—an' everything."

The lad from Wigan glimpsed his mother, saw her as a comprehensive, comforting pageant of maternity, fat creases and fat laughter; a check apron and always savoury kitchen odours in her vicinity, rich, spicy, buttery smells, her soft, moist pink face, her utter materialism and unimaginative sweetness.

Something in him broke bounds, flared. Something in his soul, the clenched swaddling bands of his imagination snapped.

He caught Prudence round the neck. Her hat came over one eye, her tears salted his eager lips.

"Why not!" he said fiercely. "Prue is all right. Mother'd like her, Dad."

Like a sword fell his father's exclamation between them.

"You know what she is!"

She answered whisperingly:

"I'm what you wanted—what you wanted. I want to have a woman who'll understand to tea."

Her hands clasped like an imploring, pathetic child; she faced them.

"I'll have to sell it all if I don't get a job, and no one will have seen it, no one who *really* knows. You don't know what it's meant, building it up. Gwen laughs—she hasn't got a soul, she doesn't understand.

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Mother'll appreciate it. I've planned to make the cakes—*everything*."

The whispering ceased, but the old man took no more notice of it than the audience takes of the orchestra during a tense moment in the play. His eyes were fixed on his son.

"We've gotter go and meet her at the station now, Prue, or she'll be scared. I'll bring her to tea this afternoon, never fear," the boy promised.

VI.

February sunshine, pale and bodiless as pinchbeck gold, flickered on the blue linoleum, on the blue and white check curtains, on the blue ware, on the blue and white check cloth, and Prudence in a blue check apron making lemon buns, steaming fish in a glass dish, and singing a little high, tuneless trill of notes.

"Company!" said Gwen. "I could smell it, dearie."

She wore her pink bathgown, her henna'd hair was in curlers, and the inevitable cigarette was at the corner of her red mouth.

Prue gazed at her in horror.

"Gwennie, you've got to hoof it—quick."

"The Prince of Wales has always liked me. He'll be pleased to see me."

"Look here——"

"Don't tell me it's the wild lads of Wigan in search of vice?"

"The mother is coming."

"I just dote on mothers, and if somebody doesn't ask me out to tea I'll die of famine. Thank you, I'll come, Miss Green. I *had* another invitation but, 'san Fairy Ann,' I'll come with pleasure."

Bleakly Prudence Green looked at her.

"Be a sport, Gwennie. They've never been inside the door."

"My dear, you want someone spry around to show you how. This may be O.K. for an ideal home exhibition, but if you think you can catch and keep a man with a row of aluminium and a whistling kettle——"

"Clear out!" flamed Prudence in a panic.

"That settles it," said Gwen. "You're ashamed of me, Miss Good-as-Gold. Very well, here I am and here I stay, curling pins and all. They'll make Ma feel at home."

Desperately, hands clutched on her lap: "Gwen, you don't know what this afternoon means to me. She's going away back to Lancashire in two days, and I wanted to see, to see her——" Her voice broke. "I never cared for clothes or theatres; I wanted a home and a nifty kitchen. I've stacks and stacks of lovely recipes I've cut out in that drawer, and I've taught myself to cook from papers. There isn't anything I don't know. All the money they gave me—not for being bad but for looking bad—I've—I've spent this way. I—I hired the clothes from Mother Spillers. I've never had a chance to cook a meal for a real woman before. It's my first party. It wasn't any good asking the other girls who used to be at the flower shop—even if I knew where they were. They'd rather go to a teashop any day. They don't understand, but she'll understand. I've always been crazy on a home ever since I was a kid. This is my first party."

Gwen said, rising stolidly: "I'll go and dress, but I won't be hoofed out. I'm as good as they are, any day."

Clutching her desperately by the arm, Prudence said: "I'll come and help you get out your things. You know what a mush they're always in."

Then far down she heard the voice of the lad from Wigan. He was bringing his mother to tea with her in the new kitchen—his mother.

"I look a dream in this cerise blouse," said Gwen.

Prudence darted away, seized the key of Gwen's front door, and locked it on the outside.

"She can murder me afterwards," she muttered. "She shan't spoil my tea party."

"So I wasn't good enough to meet Ma? Well, there's nothing wrong with my muscle. I've bust the lock of my front door, Miss Green."

Gwen standing on the threshold, tremendous in her wrath; Gwen vindictive.

"Ma," turning from the washing machine, aglow with approbation and admiration in which Prudence sunned herself almost hysterically, stared.

"Missus," said Gwen, splendidly denunciatory, "she locked me in my flat so's I shouldn't meet you. 'Tisn't you I want to talk to—it's them poor worms." She waved her arm in the direction of father and son.

"If you've anything to say of Prudence——" began the lad from Wigan.

"I've got a lot, my bright boy. You thought you'd picked a winner and you were seeing life. You paid your money for a bird; Prudence taught in Sunday-School right up till the Sunday before last. She wanted your cash to furnish a kitchen. She's so good she doesn't know a bad man on the pictures till he's hung. She was so afraid you'd find out she wasn't a bad woman before she'd bought the last cake tin that she let me come along and get a few dinners at Pa's expense. All her glad clothes she hired, just hired. What d'you think of that for meanness?"

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Prudence Green sat white and pitiful beside the table on which were the remains of fish cooked in glass, the like of which "Ma" had never seen, and lardy cake that "Ma," herself, swore she had never excelled.

"She served in a flower shop all her life, till it went bust. She was out of a job—that's why she took up with your boy. He wanted hot stuff—all he got was a bit of tepid rice pudding! Feel fine, don't you, my lad, now you know?"

"Aye," said the lad from Wigan suddenly in a deep voice, and he smiled.

Gwen turned on him.

"Ever been had?" she taunted; then to the old man: "Always wanted a kitchen, she 'as—that's where your money went. Pots and pans for seeing life. Couple o' poor, innocent worms."

The wild lad from Wigan walked to the window and looked at a dingy sunset dying dingily behind a chimney; so great was his relief, he could not trust his face or voice for that moment.

"Fast? She's never had a fellow! Dull? You thought she was a bit of fluff. Why! she doesn't care for fizz because you can't make it at home. If ever a girl took money under false pretences—— Oh! haven't you been properly had."

The mother's eyes flashed to her son's hunched shoulders, to Prudence's white face, took in her husband's consternation; divinely matter-of-fact, she brushed aside all inessentials; her jolly, fat smile, creasing her pink face in unexpected corners, flashed out.

"Law, missus!" she said genially, "how you talk! I never thought anything different the moment I saw the knife go into the lardy cake."

For just a minute her placid mind looked shuddering into possibilities. If the girl *had* been, after all, and the boy had married her! If this was London life! Wigan had been good enough for her. It would be good enough for them.

She leant across and patted Prudence's hand. Never had she seen that look on her boy's face before.

"Such a lardy cake!" she said. "Why! my own mother couldn't have beat it!"

THE PHILOSOPHER.

Nay, Lord, I do not ask for wealth,
  The sordid wealth that some hold dear,
And others make pretence to scorn;
    I only pray
  I may be always glad to hear
    Wind in the corn.

Nay, Lord, I do not seek for fame,
  That rattling gaud, that gilded toy
For men who turn to all things new;
    I only pray
  That I may always see with joy
    The morning dew.

Nor do I ask that love may bring
  Its sweet delights that pierce and rend
And leave despair when hope is past;
    I only pray:
  God grant me at the long day's end
    To sleep at last.

Almey St. John Adcock.

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